

Dual Purpose

From foster care to two doctorates, a U alumna pursues better health for Pacific Islander communities. p. 36

The Room Where It Happens

The Hinckley Institute of Politics celebrates 60 years of immersing U students in the world of politics. p. 28

Accessible Slopes

A U capstone becomes the world's only independent alpine ski for people with complex injury or illness. p. 10

The MUSS

For 25 years, the Mighty Utah Student Section has shaken stadiums, shaped traditions, and united thousands of students in U pride. p. 22





Outside

Happy Trails

Student housing as singular as Utah's scenery? That's the idea behind Trailhead, the newest residence hall on campus. The 350,000-square-foot, 1,446-bed facility opened this fall, and it's geared toward the outdoor enthusiast in every student.

"The theme of the building is about bringing people together through recreation," says Sean Grube, U associate vice president of Housing & Dining.

First, there's the living-learning community, Wild Utah, which immerses students in Utah's landscapes through classes offered by the U's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism.

Then there's the design, with its nature-inspired color palette, floor-to-ceiling windows, and a

showstopping mural of Big Cottonwood Canyon. There's space to store skis and snowboards, and plenty of bike storage—the number one amenity students request, Grube says.

His favorite features? A combination of the bouldering room, with its mechanical climbing wall, and the courtyard. Trailhead's two irregularly shaped buildings shelter the outdoor gathering spot like winding canyon walls, and "it feels like you're in southern Utah," Grube says. "It's a space students are just going to want to exist in."

And to provide fuel for all this outdoor recreating, the Trailhead café offers late-night dining, with QDOBA Mexican Eats, The Other Side Donuts, and a Vietnamese eatery called All Pho U.



Web Extra

See more photos of Trailhead at
magazine.utah.edu/trailhead

U University of Utah Magazine

FALL 2026
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A giant flag rolls across the MUSS during a 2017 Utah-Stanford football game, part of the pageantry that defines the U's nationally recognized student section.
p. 22



FEATURES

22

We'll Meet U in the MUSS

What began 25 years ago as a fledgling football fan club now shakes stadiums, shapes game-day traditions, and gives U teams a formidable home-field advantage. Meet the students behind the Mighty Utah Student Section—and discover how their roaring energy became the heartbeat of Utah Athletics.

28

The Room Where It Happens

For 60 years, the Hinckley Institute of Politics has placed U students inside the rooms where policies are made—from Utah's Capitol to Washington, D.C., and beyond. Through internships, forums, and civil dialogue, it continues its founding mission to teach students the crucial role of citizen participation in government.

36

Mālama and Kōkua

From growing up in foster care to earning two doctorates at the U, Adonica Kauwe Tuitama overcame a life of hardships in pursuit of her life's work: caring for others. Guided by the values she grew up with, she is using her dual nursing degrees to help Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities live healthier lives.



ON THE COVER

Photo Illustrator Ryan Olbrysh captures the roaring energy of the Mighty Utah Student Section, which is celebrating 25 years of disrupting opponents and uniting U fans.

WEB EXTRAS

More available at magazine.utah.edu



Authentic Italian cooking doesn't have to be difficult to be delectable, says U alum Elena Davis, the Sardinian-born food blogger behind CucinaByElena.com. Find simple recipes for carbonara, pasta alla Norcina, moist pear cake, and her Nonna's tomato sauce, along with her favorite Italian pantry staples, at magazine.utah.edu/cucina.



After completing his family medicine residency at the U, Aaron Bia returned to the Navajo Nation to care for the community that raised him. Visit magazine.utah.edu/aaronbia to read an extended version of his journey from watching his grandfather practice traditional healing to mentoring other Native students in their pursuit of medicine.

An indoor bouldering wall, gaming hub, and spacious courtyard with an amphitheater and hammocks—that's just the beginning at Trailhead, the U's newest residence hall. Inspired by Utah's outdoors, the building features floor-to-ceiling windows, abundant natural light, and murals that highlight the beauty surrounding campus. See photos at magazine.utah.edu/trailhead.

DEPARTMENTS

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Trevor Wiggins enrolled in the MBC program to grow Skale Fulfillment, which helps companies deliver their products to their customers.

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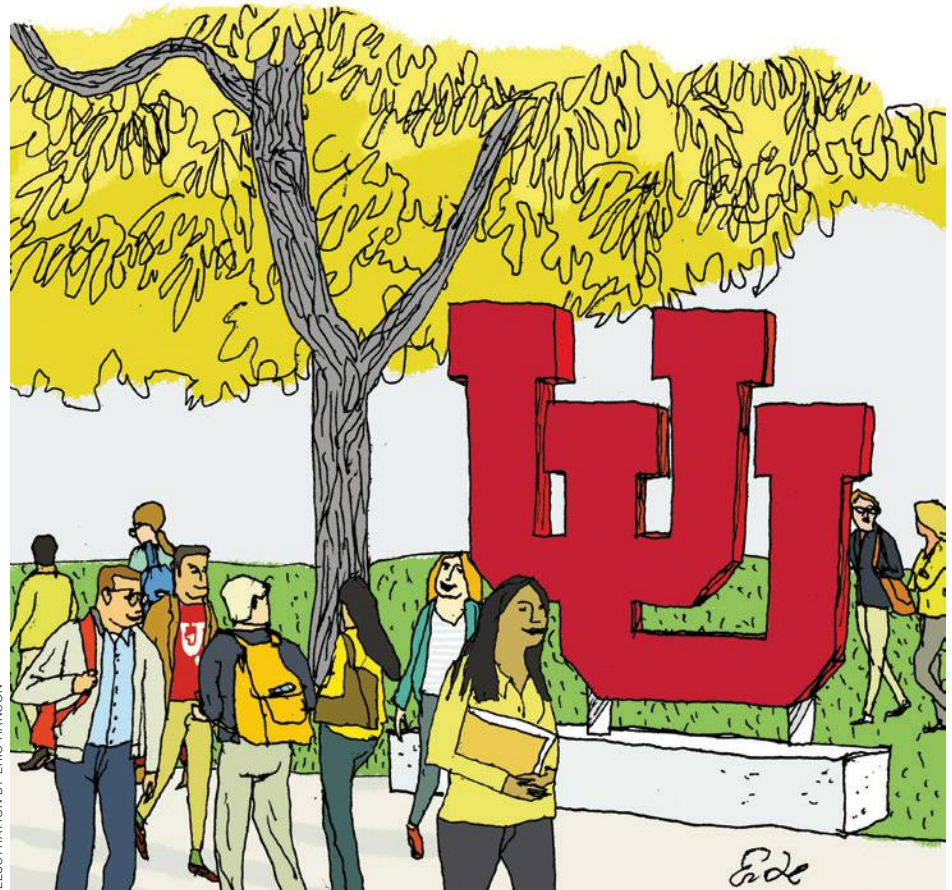


ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC HANSON

Where Traditions Begin



shakes. The readings are called UteQuakes.

What the seismometer can't measure is how something like the MUSS comes to exist. Twenty-five years ago, it was a nearly empty block of bleachers—until nine students took on the job of talking their classmates into showing up.

This issue is full of milestones, and no two of them started alike. The Hinckley Institute of Politics started 60 years ago because Robert Hinckley, a farm kid from Fillmore, Utah, believed politics was an honorable profession and built an institute to prove it (p. 28). Swoop turns 30 (p. 48), as do the Edible Campus Gardens, which were planted by students in 1996, with nearly all the harvest still going to the Feed U Pantry today (p. 17). The Utah Museum of Fine Arts marks 25 years in the Marcia and John

Three years ago, our geoscientists installed a seismometer at Rice-Eccles Stadium—not to monitor the Wasatch Fault, but to measure the MUSS (p. 22). When thousands of students jump on third downs, the stadium

Price Museum Building; its collection first hung in a few rooms of the Park Building in 1914.

Traditions gather around places, too. The Block U has long been a place where students and visitors stop for photographs. Its new companion, an interlocking U north of the Park Building, takes its shape from the U's past.

Fort Douglas, the oldest section of campus, marked a milestone this August, when its last 50 acres passed from the Army to the university. Now, much of the fort's 164 years of history is in our care (p. 8).

Whether they began with the military or just a few students and an idea, these institutions needed the U community's support to help them thrive. A tradition lasts because people keep deciding it's worth their time—a Saturday afternoon, a shovel, a semester at the Capitol. And the anniversaries in these pages are only the ones we had room for; somewhere on campus right now, a club or a lab or a choir is quietly marking a milestone of its own.

The class that moved in this fall inherits all of it—the gardens, the forums, the third-down noise. To our newest students: the next tradition is yours to begin. I look forward to celebrating the anniversary.

Go Utah!

PRESIDENT TAYLOR RANDALL HBA'90



Eerie Encounters

After reading our Summer 2026 cover story [“Legend Has It”], you shared some campus lore of your own.

When I was a student (last century), I worked in the Pioneer Theatre wig shop on University Street. Late night hours there could be extremely weird—odd footsteps, phantom voices. Definitely haunted.

AMANDA MITCHELL BA'97, SALT LAKE CITY, UT

If the former Carlson Hall [where the S.J. Quinney College of Law now sits] had been proven to be haunted, I wouldn't be surprised. Old buildings often have weird vibes; the quieter and the more empty they are, the more “alive” they seem.

KAREN FULLER

Utah Man

Readers can't wait for the Morgan Scalley era of Utah Football [“Built for This Moment,” Summer 2026].

When my longtime friend John Pease stepped down as defensive coordinator [in 2015], he told me that Morgan Scalley was exactly the perfect person to assume that coaching position. JP was a consummate judge of character and talent!

DON GLASSER BA'71, ATLANTIC BEACH, FL

The right man for the right job at the right time. Let's go do it.

LEE DAVID MILLIGAN BA'93, MURRAYSVILLE, PA

Looking forward to the next legacy-building coach for my beloved Ute Football team.

T JACQUEZ

Count the Swoops!

In honor of the U mascot's 30th birthday, we're giving away a prize for a lucky reader who correctly identifies how many times Swoop appears in this issue. Every Swoop image counts, so look closely. Submit your guess to magazine@utah.edu. A winner will be randomly selected from all correct entries.



SOCIAL SPOTLIGHT

Swoop shows his fan colors at the World Cup matchup between Mexico and South Africa. The Union Building hosted watch parties throughout the tournament, giving away prizes and serving the national cuisine of the competitors.



The Crimson Crossword

Welcome to the Crimson Crossword, our mini puzzle series. Look for it in the Comments section of every issue.

1	2	3	4	
5				6
7				
8				
	9			

ACROSS

- 1. Crimson hues all over Rice-Eccles on game day
- 5. Sing- _____ (what The MUSS does with “Utah Man”)
- 7. _____ code (body of criminal law)
- 8. Light up the board, as the Utes aim to
- 9. Quaking aspen, Utah’s state _____

DOWN

- 1. Quick knocks, as on a drum
- 2. Vote into office
- 3. Athletics booster who writes the checks
- 4. Rat-a-tat drum in the U’s pep band
- 6. Elation after a Utes buzzer beater, or a singing club

For answers or to play online, go to magazine.utah.edu/crossword.

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News from the U



Changing of the Guard

The Army Reserve moves to Camp Williams, and the last 50 acres of active military land at Fort Douglas pass to the U

The United States built Fort Douglas on the bench above Salt Lake City in 1862 to defend the western frontier—and keep an eye on Utah’s settlers. In June, 164 years later, the last U.S. Army Reserve units moved out, relocating 30 miles southwest to a \$127 million, 227,000-square-foot headquarters in Bluffdale.

The move, completed June 19, caps a process decades in the making—one that required action from the Utah State Legislature, the governor’s office, and Congress—and completes the transfer of the fort’s final 50 acres of active military land to the University of Utah.

“As we accept stewardship of this historic place, we do so with a commitment to honor its past while creating new opportunities for future generations,” says U President Taylor Randall HBA’90.

At its height, Fort Douglas sprawled across 10,500 acres of the east bench, and over 126 years, 1,534 of them passed to the U—land that now holds Research Park, Red Butte Garden, the Natural History Museum of Utah,

hospitals, and student housing. Since the last major transfer, in 1991, campus has surrounded the remaining 50-acre reserve center, where some buildings still in use were more than a century old.

Along the way, the post mobilized troops for World War I, routed communications across the Pacific Theater during World War II, and, in the 1890s, was home to the Buffalo Soldiers of the 24th Infantry Regiment.

The Army isn’t leaving entirely: the Utah National Guard will keep operating the Fort Douglas museum, and the federal government will manage the fort’s military cemetery. The rest falls to the U, with conditions. All of Fort Douglas sits on the National Register of Historic Places, and federal preservation law, with oversight from the Utah Office of Historic Preservation, will guide plans for student housing, offices, and services in a planned neighborhood that will be part of the U’s College Town Magic™.

“The best use of historic buildings is to use them,” says Chris Merritt, Utah’s state historic preservation officer.

NEWS ROUNDUP

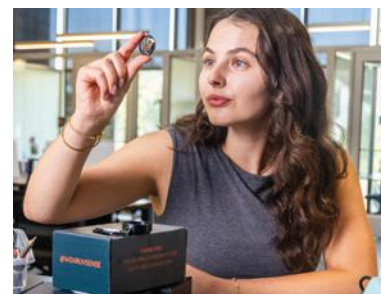


For more than 22 years, the Westside Leadership Institute—a University Neighborhood Partners program—has helped Salt Lake City’s west-side residents build leadership skills and turn ideas into action, from a maternal health group to a tree-planting campaign. Now a U team led by Professor Stacy Harwood is building the program’s first alumni database.



The University Counseling Center is marking 50 years of accreditation. Last year, it provided more than 15,000 appointments to over 2,800 students, offering therapy, mindfulness programs, and visits with Volley, its certified facility dog. Next year it turns 100, placing it among the oldest such centers in the western U.S.

The National Academy of Inventors named the University of Utah to its 2025 list of the top 100 U.S. universities granted utility patents, as well as to the top 100 worldwide. Based on U.S. Patent and Trademark Office data, the honors reflect U inventions—from medical devices to energy—moving from lab to market.



Healing Forward

Aaron Bia hoped that his path through medicine would eventually take him back home. When the day finally came, the good news spread quickly through Canyon de Chelly, Arizona: “There’s a Navajo doctor coming back.”

For a remote tribal community with a unique set of health-care challenges and a proud history of traditional medicine, the chance to be treated by a Native doctor is at once important and rare.

“I get to be that provider who looks like and represents our community,” says Bia, who recently completed his residency at the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine at the University of Utah.

Located on the vast Navajo Nation, Canyon de Chelly is 230 miles from the nearest major city. Patients may drive hours for appointments or wait months for specialists to visit the reservation. Or, patients may prefer to rely on traditional healing.

Growing up, Bia watched with awe as his grandfather, a traditional Native healer, would methodically uncover the cause of a medical problem. That might mean having a lengthy conversation with a family before determining

a boy’s rash resulted from a local insect and prescribing an herbal remedy.

“This was our health care system before modern medicine came to our tribal homelands,” Bia says.

As a child, he dreamed of uniting his grandfather’s traditional approach with modern medicine. He gravitated to the U’s Family Medicine Residency Program because of its emphasis on tribal and rural health. As a guest instructor in the Tribal, Rural, and Urban Underserved Medical Education (TRUE) Program, he helped students learn to handle challenges like long emergency response times, spotty Internet service, and chronic conditions exacerbated by social determinants of health.

“That was such a validating experience for me,” Bia says. “I knew I was in the right place.”

Back at home as a staff physician with the Indian Health Service, Bia talks of “hózhó,” or “balance in life.”

“Now, my patients are my teachers,” he says. “I learn something new every time. I can offer them my medical school training recommendations, but I’ll leave the option for if they want to pursue traditional medicine.”

CHRISTINA HERNANDEZ SHERWOOD



Web Extra

Read an extended version of Bia’s story at magazine.utah.edu/aaronbia



Reclaiming the Mountain

The motor on a TetraSki doesn't make it go. That's gravity's job. What the machine does is subtler and harder: It turns a person's faintest movement—a breath, a twitch, a press of the foot—into a carved turn down a mountain.

It began in 2014 as a University of Utah engineering capstone project and reached the snow a year later. More than a decade on, it's the world's only independent alpine ski for people with complex physical injury or illness, says Jeffrey Rosenbluth, the spinal-cord-injury physician who founded the program.

Most adaptive skiing for individuals with complex disabilities is dependent: someone holds ropes or guides the rider downhill. The TetraSki hands

some of that control back. Seated in a secure support system atop two skis, the skier steers through a joystick, a sip-and-puff breath tube, or by tiny sensors that detect the faint electrical signal created by weak muscles.

"It doesn't matter where it is—a neck muscle, a face muscle," says Rosenbluth. "We can grab an electrical signal and translate it to make the skis move."

That translation—muscle signal to carved turn—required engineers and clinicians to build side by side, an advantage Rosenbluth credits to the U. He can talk to mechanical engineers and computer scientists on one side of the street and therapists and nurses on the other, with the skiers themselves on the design team. And the slopes are right there: "We can take new products, test them on a mountain, and be back by lunch," he says.

The concept grew out of TRAILS—U of U Health's adaptive sports, wellness, and education program at the Craig H. Neilsen Rehabilitation Hospital—which since 2001 has run free adaptive recreation (skiing, cycling, watersports) for people with complex disabilities, and where every TetraSki is built and tested.

The fleet now numbers 34, spread across the country and around the world. In March, many TetraSki users gather at Powder Mountain for the TetraSki Express, an international race now in its fifth year. The next goal is bigger still: a TetraSki event at the 2034 Salt Lake City Paralympic Winter Games. "We've proven that these devices and athletes are super competitive," Rosenbluth says. "Now we're looking at a road to the Games."



Eyes on Mars

A U eye lab is studying how artificial lenses survive space—a first step toward cataract surgery far from Earth

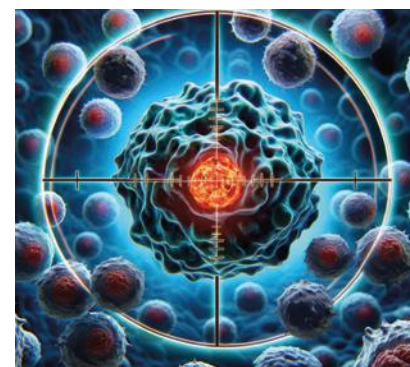
If humans ever grow old in space, they'll almost certainly need cataract surgery—the routine operation that swaps a clouded eye lens for a clear artificial one. The trouble is, no one knows how those replacement lenses hold up beyond Earth. A research collaboration involving the University of Utah's John A. Moran Eye Center aims to find out.

The project began with Texas surgeon Morgan Micheletti, who teamed with a NASA materials-testing program to send 135 types of artificial lenses to the International Space Station. For six months, the lenses sat mounted outside the station, directly exposed to the harsh conditions of space: intense UV radiation, wild temperature swings, and high levels of atomic oxygen.

Then they came to Utah. Liliana Werner, co-director of Moran's Intermountain Ocular Research Center—a lab that analyzes lens materials for companies and physicians worldwide—examined the returned lenses both there and in a U electron-microscopy lab. What she found was unlike anything in her long career.

"Cobblestones, bubble wrap, burn scars," is how Werner describes the damage—pitting and scarring on lenses that had been smooth and clear. "This damage does not happen on Earth," she says. Not every lens was harmed, she notes, likely due to where it sat and how it was stored.

The team plans to publish its findings as the work continues. "In my lifetime, someone will have cataract surgery off of this planet," Micheletti says, "and we need to figure out how to send lenses there."



New CRISPR destroys cancer and infected cells, spares the rest

The CRISPR most people have heard of works like a pair of molecular scissors, snipping DNA to fix the genetic roots of disease. A new kind works more like a paper shredder—and according to research co-led by the U's Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine, it could one day fight cancer and viruses by destroying sick cells while sparing healthy ones.

The tool relies on a recently discovered protein called Cas12a2. Researchers can program it to recognize a genetic sequence specific to cancer cells or virus-infected cells. Once it locks onto that target, it rips the cell's DNA apart until the cell self-destructs.

"Its goal is not to correct anything," says Yang Liu, assistant professor of biochemistry. "Instead, it's to destroy anything it sees."

The lab results were striking. Aimed at a cancer-causing mutation, Cas12a2 cut the growth of human lung cancer cells by 50 percent—about as well as the chemotherapy drug cisplatin. The difference, Liu says: "It does not touch the healthy cells. So if we're thinking about a cancer therapy, you're treating cancer with no side effects." Aimed at the human papillomavirus, which can cause cervical cancer, it cut infected-cell growth by more than 90 percent and slowed infected tumors in mice.

There's still a long way to go: most testing so far has been on cells in a dish, and getting enough of the protein to the right parts of the body will be a fundamental challenge. Still, Liu imagines uses well beyond cancer and viruses—from neurodegenerative disease to the diseases of aging.

So what's next for the research? "Curing the incurables," Liu says.

PICTURE

A giant orchid mantis loomed over visitors at the Natural History Museum of Utah this year, part of *Bug World*, an exhibition that blew insects up to colossal scale to spotlight their real-life superpowers—precision flight, swarm intelligence, even mind control. The towering replicas came from Wētā Workshop, the five-time Academy Award-winning effects studio behind *The Lord of the Rings*, which built the show with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.



Scaling Up

How U of U Health and Hogle Zoo gave a 400-pound crocodile a CT scan

At 61, Bill had started losing his appetite, dropping weight, and experiencing bloating—but his bloodwork came back normal, leaving his care team stumped. The obvious next step was a CT scan to check his internal organs. The not-so-obvious hurdle: Bill is a nearly 400-pound Siamese crocodile with a bite force topping 3,000 PSI.

So Utah's Hogle Zoo called in the CT experts at University of Utah Health. A team of more than 20 people restrained the 10-foot reptile, gave him a mild sedative, draped a moist cloth over his eyes to keep him calm, and moved him on a custom platform to the U's radiology department.

Scanning a patient that size took some improvising. "Our table is eight and a half

feet long, even with the extension, and his tail was still sticking out a little bit," says Hassan Bourija, radiology supervisor at U of U Health. Because the scanner table only travels so far, the team imaged Bill's head, neck, and most of his torso, then flipped him around to do the rest. They also programmed the radiation dose by hand, since his armored skin is far thicker than a human's.

The scan turned up several stones in Bill's stomach—normal for crocodiles, which swallow rocks to aid digestion—and no sign of cancer. Back home now, Bill has rejoined habitat-mate Hillary and is eating more, showing more energy, and bloating less.

"Honestly, Bill was a perfect patient," says Scott Ehr Gott, CT technologist at U of U Health.



Cannabis use is rising fastest among adults over 60—mostly for pain relief

Adults age 60-plus are taking up cannabis faster than any other age group—but according to a new study, most aren't chasing a high. They want better sleep, relief from pain, and help managing their mental health.

Researchers at University of Utah Health and the University of Colorado Boulder interviewed 169 adults over 60 who were about to buy cannabis for the first time, asking what drew them to it. "Overall, they really wanted better quality of life, reducing their pain, getting better sleep, and being able to enjoy time with family and friends a little bit more," says Rebecca Delaney, assistant professor of population health sciences at U of U Health and the study's first author.

"For the most part, we found that these folks aren't really interested in getting high. They just want to feel better," adds senior



author Angela Bryan, professor of psychology and neuroscience at CU Boulder.

Few had talked it over with a doctor; most leaned on friends and family instead. "Word of mouth has a really big impact," Delaney says.

That left participants to weigh the options alone. Edibles can contain THC (the main psychoactive compound in cannabis), CBD, or both. Most chose a

mix of the two, viewing it as a "Goldilocks option."

One caveat: the survey was conducted in Colorado, where recreational cannabis is legal, so the picture may look different in Utah and other medical-only states. Still, Delaney suspects the core motivations are probably the same—and she hopes the findings nudge more of these conversations into the doctor's office.



\$22K

The \$22,000 Question

Graduating with a bachelor's degree in Utah can put an extra \$22,000 a year in your pocket. That's the gap between the average salaries of a Utahn with a four-year degree (\$65,239) and a neighbor who stopped at high school (\$43,090). The number comes from a Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute brief measuring what higher education delivers in this state. Just 2 percent of Utahns with a bachelor's degree are unemployed, compared with 3.7 percent of those with only a high school diploma. More than three-quarters of 2025 graduates from the Utah System of Higher Education left college with credentials tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs.

What skills do graduates need in the age of AI?

Panel



JEFF PHILLIPS

PROFESSOR, KAHLERT SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

Calculators didn't eliminate the need to understand mathematics; they accelerated our ability and accuracy. AI is leading to similar interfaces for generating language and code. The challenge is that it produces answers even with ambiguity or incomplete information, often with over-confidence. So the burden falls on the most fundamental human skills: creativity, ethical introspection, and critical thinking. The human role is to ask the right questions and verify the veracity of the output.



HIMANSHU MISHRA

ROYAL L. GARFF ENDOWED CHAIR IN MARKETING, ASSOCIATE DEAN OF AI, DAVID ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Five years ago, the question for a business graduate was, "Can you find the answer?" Now it's, "Can you direct a system that produces a fluent, confident answer and then determine if it's correct?" What separates an AI-fluent graduate is not knowledge of specific tools, since tools change quickly. It's judgment: when to use AI, how to guide it, what to trust, and what to retain. Business fundamentals matter more, not less, because AI can produce analysis that sounds convincing even when it's wrong.



KENNETH COLLINS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF FILM & MEDIA ARTS

For the first time, students can make films with no ceiling on their ambitions. Distant planets, crowds, creatures, things that once required a big budget and months of post-production are now within reach with only a laptop and some AI credits. But the tools are the easy part; they'll be obsolete by graduation anyway. The more valuable skills are taste, a sharp eye, strong opinions, and the patience to reject far more outputs than you keep. A point of view is the part students take out into the world.



ELIZABETH CALLAWAY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

AI affects education, labor, relationships, creativity, and civic life, so decisions about it can't be left to technical experts alone. A humanities education prepares students to take part in those conversations—to weigh competing values, learn from history, and imagine alternative futures. It pushes them to ask deeper questions: not just how to make AI safer or more efficient, but what problems it should solve, whose interests it serves, and what kind of human flourishing we want it to support.



Staking Ground at The Point

U of U Health secures 46 acres for a proposed health campus serving the growing south valley closer to home

University of Utah Health is planting a health care flag in one of the state's fastest-growing corridors. In a ceremonial signing, U of U Health, the State of Utah, and the Point of the Mountain State Land Authority formalized an agreement securing 46 acres for a proposed health campus at The Point—a 600-acre master-planned community rising near the Salt Lake–Utah County line.

The deal makes U of U Health the health care anchor for the development and lays the groundwork for a future campus that could include both inpatient and outpatient care. The aim is to close a geographic gap. Residents across the booming south valley—Draper, Lehi, Saratoga Springs, and beyond—now drive long distances for specialized care.

“As Utah grows, the University of Utah must grow with it,” says U President Taylor Randall HBA’90. Bob Carter, CEO of U of U Health, framed the purchase as a foundation rather than a finished plan: “This land purchase is an exciting milestone because it gives us the foundational footprint to bring comprehensive, nationally ranked care closer to people where they already live and work.” He added that the project doesn’t diminish U of U Health’s existing commitments with the Eccles Health Campus and Eccles Hospital in West Valley and Huntsman Cancer Institute in Vineyard.

Planning is in its earliest stages, with campus size and services still to be shaped over the next several years. Once running, U of U Health expects to employ roughly 2,500 people at the site.

PICTURE

Stroll through Red Butte Garden and Arboretum and you’d never guess what’s buzzing beneath the blooms: 130 bee species—roughly 10 percent of the state’s known bees—in just 100 acres. Sarah Hinners, the garden’s conservation and research director, and a dozen volunteers set out to count them this past summer.



BY THE NUMBERS

University of Utah Health does more than treat patients. As the state’s only academic medical center, it’s one of Utah’s economic engines—and a new report from the U’s Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute put numbers to its reach in FY 2024:



~31,000

Jobs at U of U Health across its hospitals, clinics, health schools, and component units

~70,000

Total jobs supported statewide, when ripple effects are counted

2.9%

Share of all Utah jobs supported



\$13.7 Billion

Total economic output contribution

\$7.6 Billion

Gross domestic product contribution



\$5.6 Billion

Earnings supported

\$492 Million

Research funding, most of it federal dollars brought into Utah

1



Academic medical centers in Utah (it’s the only one)

A New Home for Medical Innovation

This spring, University of Utah Health unveiled what leaders say is the only facility of its kind in the world. The James LeVoy Sorenson Center for Medical Innovation (SCMI), a \$50-million hub, is designed to bring life-changing innovations from the lab to the patient's bedside faster.

"We don't think there's another building like this with these features and a hyperfocus on developing medical technologies," says Mark Paul BA'87, executive director of the Center for Medical Innovation at U of U Health.

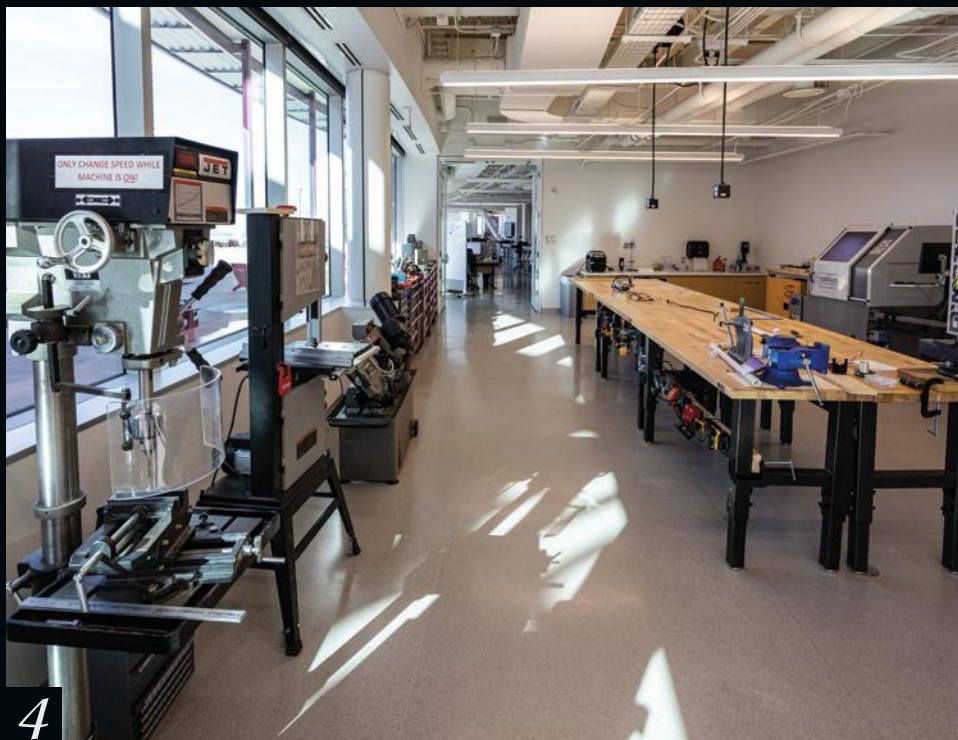
The U has a long history of biotech innovation, from the Jarvik heart to the bionic leg. Until now, that work has happened in disconnected spaces. SCMI brings the facilities together under one roof, with a bio-tissue surgery discovery suite, prototyping labs, clean room manufacturing, startup incubator spaces, and areas for training and collaborating.

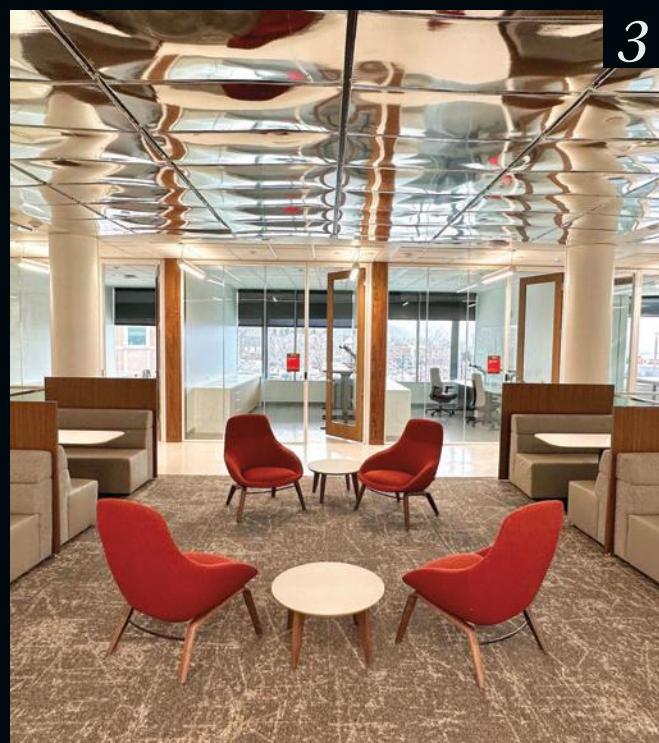
"If you're testing a new shoulder device and something's not fitting right, you can 3D print a new component, modify it, and come right back up," says Paul. "It allows you to innovate in an operating room environment, rapidly."

Named in honor of inventor and philanthropist James LeVoy Sorenson and made possible by a \$22 million lead gift from the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, the center skyrockets the U's biotech capabilities.

"In bringing all these specialties together in one place, we are rising to the level of the very best innovation institutions on earth," says Paul.

1. The ASCENT surgical lab allows for medical device testing and training, with 10 operating bays.
2. With a goal of hosting innovation conferences, SCMI includes large gathering spaces, including a hospitality lounge designed for catered events.
3. The startup and incubator spaces include furnished offices, shared workspaces, conference rooms, and compliant cleanrooms for device assembly and testing.
4. Assembly and prototyping labs contain equipment for 3D printing, laser and vinyl cutting, sanding and finishing, welding and joining, building electronics, and more.
5. The rippled ceiling symbolizes the building's impact throughout the world.





Thirty Years in the Dirt

A student-grown campus garden celebrates three decades—and still hands over its harvest

Thirty years ago, a handful of U students dug a garden into campus. It's still growing—and feeding the U. The Edible Campus Gardens, launched in 1996, marks its 30th anniversary this year. It is a place to grow food, belonging, and knowledge: here, students can engage in classes, research, and hands-on experience. "The gardens have always been about more than just food," says Gabrielle James BS'21, who oversees the program. "They're about giving students a place to learn, connect, and understand where their food comes from. We're cultivating experiential learning, community resilience, environmental stewardship, and well-being."

The gardens also help feed a hungry campus. Each year, they nurture a harvest that supports both people and the planet. They work with the U's Feed U Pantry to put that fresh food within reach of students and other community members facing food insecurity. Last year's harvest was 1,500 pounds; a recent redesign is expected to double the yield without adding a square foot—and student employees who tend the plots teach their peers and volunteers how to grow and reap.

Anyone can dig in. The program welcomes 1,500 participants throughout the year, and everyone is invited to join. Students, staff, faculty, and the wider community attended the 30th anniversary celebration on October 8.

Hitting the Ground Running

Roll over, joysticks. At the 2026 Game Developers Conference (GDC), the must-try alternative controller was a human-sized hamster ball.

"Immediately upon opening, we had 20 or so people at our booth. It was like that the entire time," says Charles Tyndal MEAE'26, a graduate of the U's Division of Games. Tyndal and 12 fellow students are the brains behind *Udon Uncaged*, where players assume the POV of an escaped hamster who dodges obstacles on its quest toward an open window.

For one of their semester-long projects, Division of Games grad students are tasked with creating an alt-control game. Lead producer Tyndal and his team immediately got the ball rolling. They wanted a showstopping portfolio project that would create buzz at conferences.

"The dream was that you would immediately see the game, know what's going on, and want to play it," says Tyndal.

The team worked over the semester, taking advantage of maker spaces and tools at the U's Lassonde Studios. The larger-than-life idea required time, space, and considerable trial and error. One failed notion involved 800 ball pit balls—the only affordable option for the student team—in an omnidirectional ball-bearing system that, sadly, didn't stand up to the weight. Plus, play testing showed players wanted speed—and the security of the ball staying in place.

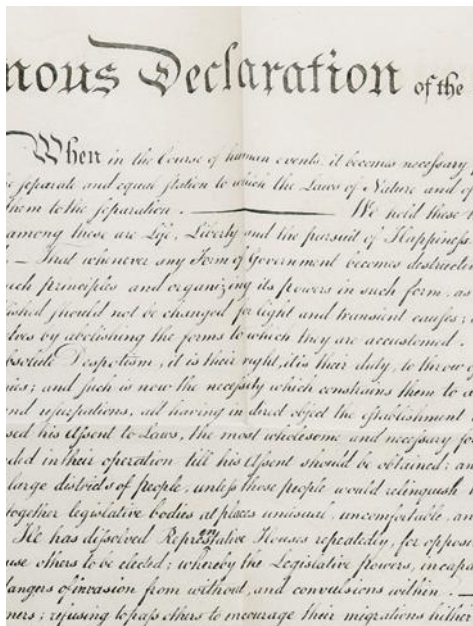
"They loved the fantasy of getting in this ball and going as fast as they can without worrying about anything," Tyndal says.

The team finally settled on a double-walled inflatable ball atop a custom-built PVC-pipe treadmill, with teammates standing on either side for support. The result proved a hit at the GDC, earning Gamedeveloper.com's "Best of GDC" award—and the attention of industry professionals.

"I was constantly being approached by people from companies I would love to work for," Tyndal says. "Those people now know some of my work, which is insane."

A Founding Find

The Marriott Library turns up an early, remarkably clear copy of the Declaration of Independence



The Marriott Library has found a copy of the Declaration of Independence that's easier to read than the original—a facsimile copied directly from the founding document and now among the earliest versions available.

Its pedigree runs straight back to the original. In 1820, John Quincy Adams, then secretary of state, commissioned Washington, D.C., engraver William J. Stone to reproduce the handwritten Declaration. Stone spent three years engraving a copperplate from the original and sold it to the State Department in 1823. Two hundred prints were struck on parchment and sent to official institutions and the Declaration's surviving signers.

Decades later, Stone's friend and colleague Peter Force was assembling *American Archives*, a collection of transcribed manuscripts on the history of the American colonies. He commissioned Stone to pull fresh prints from that same plate, and the Declaration was folded into the Fifth Series, Volume 1, published in 1848—the copy now in the library's hands.

"We were absolutely thrilled when we discovered this treasure," says Todd Samuelson, associate dean for Special Collections. "Since it was created using an immediate transfer from the original Declaration, it is more legible than the original."

The facsimile is on display in "America in the Archives: The Many Voices of Democracy," an exhibition on the fourth floor of the Marriott Library that traces the nation's story through its records. It runs through November 29, 2026.



This smartwatch tracks your blood pressure without a cuff

Blood pressure isn't a fixed number—it rises and falls all day as you walk, run, or climb stairs. But the standard cuff catches only a single snapshot, usually taken while you sit still. Now an interdisciplinary team of mathematicians and engineers from the University of Utah and the University of Illinois, Chicago, has built a cuffless wearable device that tracks blood dynamics continuously.

The smartwatch, described in *Nature Communications*, measures both blood pressure and blood flow by reading the electrical properties of blood as it pulses through the artery at the wrist.

"Elevated blood pressure is considered the silent killer because it leads to heart attacks, aneurysms, and strokes," says UIC's Benjamin Sanchez Terrones, who hatched the project as a U assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering.

Unlike commercial devices that use light and lean on machine learning as a "black box," his watch uses a painless electrical current, recording tiny changes through bioimpedance—a measure of how easily electricity flows through blood and tissue. Because the team encoded the physics of blood flow directly into the model, the results are more accurate and interpretable.

"Blood pressure isn't two numbers; it's a function of time," says co-author Braxton Osting, a U professor of mathematics. "Embedding the physics of blood flow directly into the model makes the prediction more trustworthy."

Graduate students tested the device on 150 people, including outpatient and intensive-care patients.

PICTURE

When a September 2020

windstorm stripped sections of vinyl siding from three 1891 Army cottages at Fort Douglas, it exposed a surprise underneath: the buildings' original cladding, damaged but intact. Rather than patch over it, the University of Utah committed to a full restoration. Referring to photographs from around 1900, the restoration team rebuilt decorative corbels and gable trim from salvaged materials and tucked in modern seismic and energy upgrades. The cottages' careful revival earned a Rehabilitation and Restoration Award.



A study finds U.S. suicide moves in cycles

In the most comprehensive look yet at American suicide, researchers traced 122 years of data—and the long view revealed two patterns hidden in the short term. Suicide rates in the United States rise and fall in slow, decades-long cycles, likely shaped by broad social forces. Beneath that rhythm runs a steadier, more troubling trend: suicide among young people has climbed for more than half a century, reaching each new generation earlier in life.

The study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, drew on U.S. mortality records from 1900 to 2021, assembled into a new dataset by a team led by Nina de Lacy, a U physician-scientist and psychiatrist.

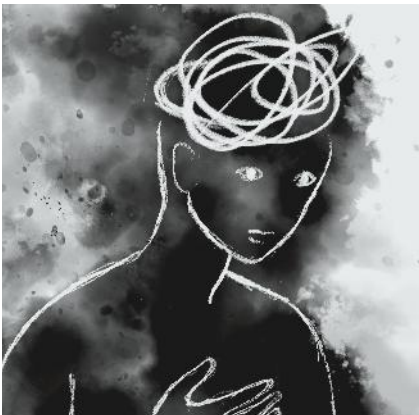
Overall rates rose and fell roughly every 10 to 25 years, peaking during periods of upheaval—industrialization in the 1910s, the Great Depression, the women's rights movement of the 1970s.

"Very few causes of death behave like this," de Lacy says. "Heart disease, cancer, and motor vehicle deaths generally decline when effective interventions are introduced. Suicide doesn't follow that pattern. It fluctuates, reverses direction, and resists long-term reduction."

The youth trend began much earlier than previously recognized, in the mid-to-late 1950s. Historically, suicide risk was highest among older adults; over time, that gap narrowed as older rates fell and rates among those under 35 rose. Today suicide is among the leading causes of death for people ages 10 to 34.

Additional contributors to the paper include Wai-yin Lam, Dept. of Psychiatry; Timothy Collins, School of Environment, Society, and Sustainability; Fernando A. Wilson, Matheson Center for Health Care Studies; and Ken R. Smith, Dept. of Family and Consumer Studies and Huntsman Cancer Institute.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS STRUGGLING, THE SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE IS AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY BY CALLING OR TEXTING 988.



Power Without People

Nuclear energy is booming across the Intermountain West, but experts warn there aren't enough trained workers to keep up

The Mountain West is in the middle of a nuclear renaissance. Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming are all racing to expand nuclear energy—but the country may not have enough workers to keep up, especially in the specialized field of radiation safety.

That was the warning at the 2026 John Horan Health Physics Symposium, which drew national experts and state and federal leaders to the University of Utah in April.

The numbers are daunting. To meet expansion goals, the U.S. will need 184,000 more workers in the nuclear industry—plus another 250,000 for construction—says Wendi Secrist, executive director of the Idaho Workforce Development Council, citing a 2025 Department of Energy study. And it's not just engineers: electricians and technicians matter just as much.

Nowhere is the gap wider than in radiation safety, or health physics—the science of protecting people from radiation. The pool of ex-

perts has been shrinking for decades; health physics degrees fell sharply in the mid-1990s, when federal support for the field was cut, and never recovered, leaving only a handful of accredited programs, some at risk of closing.

"Nuclear energy in the U.S. has an excellent safety record with over 60 years of operational experience. This is in no small part due to a workforce of dedicated and highly trained radiation safety professionals," says Frederick Monette, executive director of Environmental Health and Safety at the U and a board-certified health physicist with over 35 years of experience.

"If everything goes as planned, there's going to be a hundred-odd new reactors in the next 10 years," says Tom Johnson, health physics program director at Colorado State University. "We are in no way prepared for that."

Speakers say the fix won't happen on its own. "It's not going to just work itself out," Secrist says. "We have to be intentional."

IMPACT AT ALTITUDE

Elevation changes what's possible. At the University of Utah, we can see farther and reach higher. Our students and researchers turn bold questions into innovations that reach far beyond the mountains that surround us. From these heights, anything is possible.



[IMPACT.UTAH.EDU](https://impact.utah.edu)

WE'LL MEET IN THE MUSSE

WHAT BEGAN AS A FOOTBALL FAN CLUB 25
YEARS AGO HAS BECOME THE
HEARTBEAT OF UTAH ATHLETICS



BY LISA ANDERSON

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY RYAN OLBRYSH

WE'RE UP TO SNUFF, WE NEVER BLUFF, WE'RE GAME



FOR ANY FUSS. NO RIVAL BAND OF COLLEGE FANS DARE

MEET US IN THE MUSS SSUM STADIUM IN SJ TEEM

E FOR ANY FUSS. NO RIVAL BAND OF COLLEGE FANS DARE

IT'S SEPTEMBER 15, 2007, AT RICE-ECCLES STADIUM.

No. 11 UCLA is playing the unranked 0-2 Utes. On key third downs, the MUSS—the Mighty Utah Student Section—erupts with so much noise that the Bruins can't hear their own signals. They jump early. They jump again. By the final whistle, the Utes have demolished the Bruins 44-6. UCLA coach Karl Dorrell would later admit, "We just didn't handle the noise very well. We lost our poise and had some critical penalties that stalled some drives."

In the almost 25 years since its founding, the MUSS has built a reputation for earsplitting sound and ground-shaking energy—so much so that in 2023, U geoscientists installed a seismometer at the stadium to measure what they dubbed "UteQuakes." The fans' zeal has also earned recognition: In 2021, ESPN and Taco Bell named the MUSS the Live Más Student Section of the Year.

For Kai Cruz, 2026 MUSS president, it's about more than making noise. "I'll get into my seat and turn around and see thousands of students all ready to go," he says. "There's nothing that fires me up more than that—the sense that you're part of something bigger than yourself."

HOW IT STARTED

Twenty-five years ago, Utah wasn't known for football. Ticket sales at Rice-Eccles languished. As for the student section, "There was just dust rolling through it," former Utah Athletic Director Chris Hill said in a 20th-anniversary video about the MUSS.

Utah was considered a basketball school. The Rick Majerus era had Runnin' Utes fans flocking to the arena, energizing the team's NCAA Tournament runs. A student section called the Huntsman Center Hooligans supercharged the arena's electric atmosphere and made every home game a spectacle.

Utah Football wanted in on that magic. Kim Sorrentino, then assistant marketing director of Utah Athletics, and John Fackler, then a director of alumni relations, proposed a football fan club, which would be managed by the U Alumni office, and enlisted nine students to help build it.

"The students would literally accost people and say, 'Hey, you need to go to football games,'" says Fackler BS'89 BS'94 MprA'95.

Thanks to those efforts, and the students' suggestions to improve ticketing policies, the club sailed past its initial goal of 300 members. Then came the shot of adrenaline Utah Football needed—a fiery young coach named Urban Meyer, who launched Utah Football into a successful new era that Kyle Whittingham would carry forward.

Every year, as Utah Football's star rose, the MUSS matched pace, recruiting exponentially more students and obtaining thousands more seats at Rice-Eccles.

"We knew we had made it when we were crashing computer servers on registration day," says Fackler.

Today, the MUSS occupies five sections at the stadium. The MUSS+ ticket, which grants access to all home football games, is awarded by lottery.

U Alumni still proudly oversees the program. "The MUSS bonds last a lifetime," says Kris Bosman BS'99, chief alumni relations officer. "Those bonds keep students connected to each other and the U long after they graduate."



FLASHING THE U

The MUSS and Utah Football popularized the iconic hand symbol, first created by Utah gymnast Melissa Vituj BS'05 and family friend John Bircumshaw, honorary alumnus '23 (neither is pictured).

WHAT'S A MUSS?

In a 2002 *Daily Utah Chronicle* piece titled "I'd Like to Meet Our Lame Fight Song in a Muss," columnist Jared Whitley HBA'03 HBA'03 shared his take on "Utah Man."

"Have you ever looked at these words?" he wrote of the 100-year-old lyrics. "Meet us in the muss? Muss isn't even a word!"

Turns out it *is* a word, Jared—it means a state of chaos or disorder. Erik Finn Larson BS'04 read that opinion piece and must have intuited a future where U students would cause turmoil for the opposing team. He suggested it for the section of Rice-Eccles where the new Utah Football Fan Club sat.

"I didn't intend for it to take over as the name of the group, but it just kind of stuck," he said in a *Utah Magazine* article.

People assumed the obscure word was an acronym, so Scott Hammer BA'04 came up with "Mighty Utah Student Section."

"I've always said thank goodness there was a 'U' in it," John Fackler says.



"COACH KYLE WHITTINGHAM WOULD TELL US, 'YOU ARE THE 12TH MAN

At football, basketball, and gymnastics matchups, the MUSS passes a giant flag up over the student section.

CROWD FLAGS



HOW IT'S GOING

Nearly 25 years on, game day at Rice-Eccles runs rituals the MUSS made its own. Almost none of them were planned. Most started the same way: a student with an idea, and a section willing to try it.



THIRD DOWN JUMP

This tradition—making eardrum-shattering noise to prevent the opposing team from converting on third downs—first appeared at a 2006 BYU–Utah game, led by future 2008–09 MUSS president Philip Malugade BS'09 and Kyle Larson HBS'09. “We worked with John Fackler, who saw the potential for this to take off,” Malugade recalled in a 2021 *Utah Magazine* article.

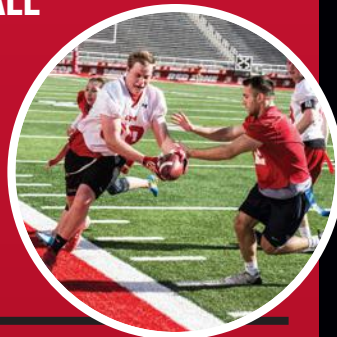
It was officially adopted at the 2007 UCLA game and became the MUSS's trademark.

“Coach Whittingham would tell us, ‘You are the 12th man on defense during the Third Down Jump,’” says Avery Abelhouzen BA'22, 2021 MUSS president. “It really felt like we had this distinct role of potentially forcing the other team to have a false start.”

MORE MUSS MOVES

FLAG FOOTBALL

Urban Meyer suggested a yearly game between MUSS members at Rice-Eccles. The first prizes: Crown Burger (winners) and unfrosted Pop-Tarts (losers).



U OF U CHOP

An early MUSS tradition. The band plays a specific rhythm, and students flash the U while “chopping” to the beat.



HIGH FIVES

After games at Rice-Eccles and the Huntsman Center, Utah players high-five the lucky students in the MUSS's first row.

FALSE START TALLY

When an opposing lineman flinches, the MUSS hangs a number 5 over the railing—one for every five yards the penalty gives back.

LIGHTING THE 'U'

After a win, the football team stands in front of the MUSS and presses a lever to light the U on the mountain.

FIRST DOWN CHANT

For every Utah first down, MUSS members raise their hands, yell “first down!,” and point downfield, mimicking the ref.

RUNNING THE FLAGS

Raffle winners at MUSS tailgates get to run the MUSS flags onto the field as the team enters the stadium.





MOMENT OF LOUDNESS

WHO ROCKS THE HOUSE?

Before the Red Rocks take the mat for their floor routines, they perform this cheer with the MUSS.



It starts like a usual moment of silence—everyone up, phone flashlights on. Then it changes course. Instead of quiet, 22 seconds of exultant, thundering, heart-pounding noise.

When Utah Football set out to honor the memory of Ty Jordan, a running back who died tragically in December 2020, they wanted the gesture to feel personal. Jordan's freshman season was during the COVID pandemic, explains Abelhouzen, the 2021 MUSS president, and he passed away without getting to experience the roar of a capacity Rice-Eccles crowd. The Moment of Loudness was a way to give that back to him.

"The football team and Coach Whittingham came to us and told us how much they wanted the MUSS to be a part of it," she says. "Everyone felt how powerful it could become."

When cornerback Aaron Lowe was killed less than a year later, the Moment of Loudness embraced him too. Both had worn 22, and Utah retired the number that season. Now the roar goes up for Ty, Aaron, and all loved ones the U community has lost.



THE MUSS BUS

The tradition of chartering a bus for one road game a year started in 2003 at Coach Urban Meyer's suggestion, after the Utes made it to the Liberty Bowl.

Jake Olson BA'05 helped organize that first trip, a nonstop 28-hour ride from Salt Lake City to Memphis, Tennessee. Olson recalls watching copious movies on the bus's VHS players, eating barbecue on Beale Street,

going to Graceland and the National Civil Rights Museum, and hearing Utah's and Southern Miss's bands duke it out, battle-of-the-bands style, at a bowl-game lunch.

Then, before the game, the director of football operations approached the MUSS. There'd been a mix-up, and they needed a few ball boys. Olson volunteered. "I was on the sidelines for the game with the players," he says.

After a 17-0 Utes victory, the inaugural MUSS Bus trip left for its 28-hour leg home—five people shy.

"They couldn't stomach the ride back," Olson remarks.

The entire trip was a great time, he says, but spending a total of 56 hours on a bus was more akin to a trauma bonding experience.

"To this day, I'll see some of [those original MUSS Bus riders] at a Utah game, and we don't really have to say anything. We just look at each other and nod."

"OUR STUDENT SECTION HAS THE ABILITY TO CREATE A TRUE HOME-

A MUSS LOVE STORY



It was love at first sound when Michael Holzrichter BS'18 met his future wife, Shannel Holzrichter (née Kruse) BS'18.

Michael was sitting in the MUSS, watching Utah fail to convert a first down again and again, when he heard a female voice a few rows back yelling, "Why are we running the same play again?"

"I was like, one, thank you for saying that, and two, who are you? I need to meet you," says Michael.

They spent their second date camping out for ESPN's College GameDay, where Michael "knew it was love again" when Shannel showed up to Presidents Circle with tacos. When Michael became MUSS president and Shannel got a job with Utah Football, they saw even more of each other. Five years (and countless games and MUSS Bus trips) later, they were married. Now they have a baby girl, Mariah, who will attend her first Utes game this fall.

WHERE IT'S HEADED

As it nears 25 years, the MUSS has helped transform Rice-Eccles into what commentators have called "one of the great environments in college football" and "the most underrated home-field advantage in the country." MUSS Board members want that magic to touch all sports.

"It's our goal to rebuild what was once an amazing basketball culture here on campus," says Cruz, the 2026 MUSS president. A new basketball committee will put more focus on both men's and women's games. And a new rewards system for attending non-football events has already boosted student turnout in almost every U sport.

"It makes a big difference to our athletes when fellow students cheer them on in the stands," says MUSS Board member Molly Sarto, part of the Olympic sports committee. Her favorite event? Red Rocks meets. "The gymnastics team is unreal," she says. "We were able to go observe a practice one time, and I was like, 'I'm standing inches away from Olympians.'"

When Utah Athletics announced plans to improve the fan experience at the

Huntsman Center (which may include a future renovation), the first concrete decision was to unify the disconnected patches of MUSS seats throughout the arena.

"Our student section has the ability to create a true home-court advantage and become an extension of our team," Utah volleyball head coach Alyssa D'Errico said in a press release about the changes.

As the board works on a bigger MUSS presence at all sports, Cruz says, it also wants to communicate the idea of "MUSS for all."

"There seems to be this belief among students that the MUSS is an exclusive club, when that's just not true. It's open to every student here on campus," he says. "I want the MUSS to be more than just a place where students can get rowdy and cheer on our teams. I want it to be a space where students can find friends and community and a sense of belonging." **U**

Lisa Anderson is associate editor of Utah Magazine.



3-POINT JUMP

A spinoff of the Third Down Jump. Students make noise after every Utah 3-pointer to disrupt the opponent's possession.

STICK IT

When a gymnast sticks a landing, the MUSS sticks a note with her name on a sign that says "Stick'd."



SOCCER DRUMS

Borrowing from global soccer culture, the MUSS drumline thunders with beats every time Utah scores a goal.

U'S UP

Before every Utah free throw, the band claps and yells "throw up your U!" and the MUSS follows suit.



The Room Where It Happens

THE U'S HINCKLEY INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
MARKS 60 YEARS OF CONNECTING
STUDENTS AND THE PUBLIC TO
THE POLITICAL WORLD.

BY SETH BRACKEN ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT

IN THE WINTER OF 1973, a veteran Utah legislator handed an intern named Rob Bishop BS'74 the most important bill of his session—funding for schools in Washington County—and told him to write the speech. Bishop handed in a tidy outline. Not what the lawmaker wanted. *Write me something I can stand up and say.* So Bishop went to a typewriter, turned the outline into sentences, and the next morning climbed to the Utah House gallery to watch what became of them. The legislator rose and read it on the floor—almost word for word as Bishop had written it.

Half a century later, Bishop can still summon the feeling. "Why," he remembers thinking, "would you trust me with that?"

It's a small story, and the kind the Hinckley Institute of Politics has been producing for over 60 years. Founded on May 10, 1965—a year before Harvard's Institute of Politics—the institute has put more than 10,000 students, around 400 a year, into the rooms where decisions get made: statehouses, congressional offices, campaigns.

"You may not like politics, but politics likes you," says Jason Perry JD'99, the institute's director. "The decisions made in politics affect our lives every day. They shape the communities we live in, the opportunities we have, and the future we're building together. At the Hinckley Institute, we give students the chance to step into that process, understand it, and learn how they can make a difference."

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
ROBERT H. HINCKLEY

FOUNDER OF THE HINCKLEY INSTITUTE OF POLITICS



BORN IN 1891,
HE WAS A FARM KID
FROM FILLMORE.



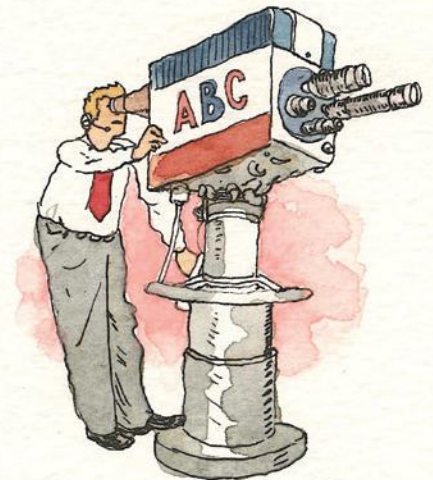
AT 24 YEARS OLD, HE OPENED ONE OF
THE COUNTRY'S FIRST DODGE DEALERSHIPS.



HE WON A SEAT IN THE UTAH
LEGISLATURE AT 27.



HE HELPED CREATE
THE UTAH PACIFIC
AIRWAYS...

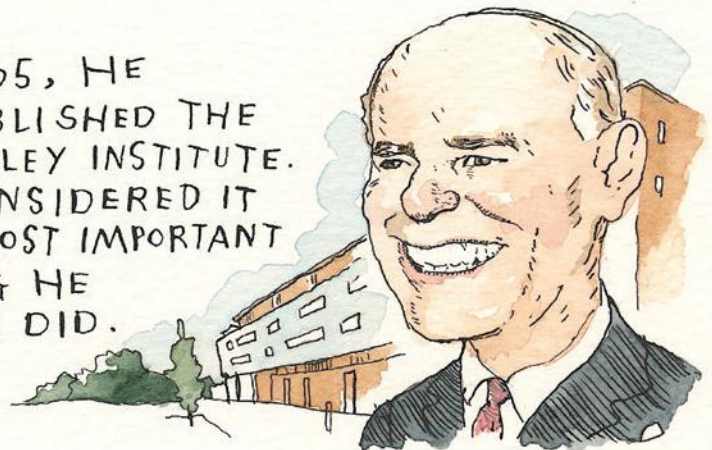


...AS WELL AS THE
ABC BROADCASTING
NETWORK.



FDR ENLISTED HIS HELP
BUILDING THE COUNTRY'S AIRWAYS.

IN 1965, HE
ESTABLISHED THE
HINCKLEY INSTITUTE.
HE CONSIDERED IT
THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING HE
EVER DID.



HALL OF FAME HONOREES

The Hinckley Institute created its Hall of Fame in 1996 to honor Utahns whose careers in public office left a mark on the state—governors, senators, members of Congress. Ten have been inducted in the 30 years since.

Wallace F. Bennett

BA'19: U.S. senator who shaped Utah's aerospace and defense industries

Scott M. Matheson Sr.

BS'50: Utah governor known for education leadership and federal-state land policy advocacy

Frank E. Moss

BA'33: U.S. senator and champion of consumer protection and national park expansion

Calvin L. Rampton

JD'39: Utah's longest-serving governor and architect of modern state government

Norman H.

Bangerter ex'60: Utah governor who strengthened education and economic development

James V. Hansen

BS'62: U.S. representative and influential voice on public lands and natural resources

Olene S. Walker

PhD'87: Utah's first female governor and longtime advocate for literacy, housing, and education

Wayne Owens

JD'64: U.S. representative devoted to environmental protection, downwinder justice, and Middle East peace

Brent Scowcroft:

National Security Advisor to two presidents and a leading figure in U.S. foreign policy

Robert Bennett

BS'57: U.S. senator and respected business leader known for economic and energy policy expertise

THE BELIEVER

THE IDEA CAME FROM Robert H. Hinckley. His grandson Jim BS'71 MPL'77 MS'77—who now chairs the institute's board—grew up on the stories. “My grandfather was a farm kid from Fillmore,” he says. “He went on a mission to Germany right before the First World War, and two things happened to him there he never got over. He got thrown in jail as a suspected anarchist. And he went up in an airplane for the first time, with Melli Beese, one of the first women in the world to fly one.”

Hinckley opened one of the country's first Dodge dealerships in 1915, graduated from Brigham Young University the next year, and won a seat in the state legislature at 27. Franklin Roosevelt pulled him to Washington, where he chaired the Civil Aeronautics Authority, oversaw the building of Washington National Airport, and ran the program that trained civilian pilots on the eve of the Second World War. Afterward he helped start the network that became ABC. He titled his memoir *I'd Rather Be Born Lucky Than Rich*.

It was a large life. “And at the end of it, in his eighties, he told me the most important thing he ever did was none of that,” Jim Hinckley says. “Not the aviation. Not the television network. It was this institute.”

He came to it late, by way of frustration. On the University of Utah's Board of Regents, he found working politicians unwelcome on campus—the students, like the country, had started to treat electoral politics as faintly shameful. He set out to change it. “[My parents] brought me up on the basis that politics is an honorable profession,” he once wrote, “and would always be so long as there were good people in office.” In 1965, with money from the foundation of his old ABC partner—the man behind Life Savers candy—he endowed the institute with a one-line mission: teach students respect for practical politics and the principle of citizen involvement in government. Or, as Robert Hinckley would say: “Participation. Participation. Participation.”

THE UNLIKELY ONES

A STUDENT PAMPHLET from 1977 put it as well as anyone has since: The Hinckley Institute is about sending students out into the world, and bringing the world to campus. No university entity has sent more students abroad than The Hinckley Institute has through its internships. And the way it runs them is a statement of its own. “We're not just for poli-sci majors,” says Morgan Lyon Cotti BA'01, the institute's associate director. “We take pre-meds, engineers, anyone, because government touches everything.” For years, the institute took students to a conference at Harvard, where they sat with kids from Yale and Brown who described the scramble to land a single internship before graduation. Lyon Cotti says the Utah students are baffled: Wasn't the point of college political institutes to provide internships to everybody? Cost isn't supposed to stand in the way, either: The institute subsidizes housing and gave out more than \$1 million in scholarships last year.

One of the most generous is the legislative internship: each spring, about 30 students leave class to spend Utah's entire 45-day session as full-time staff—drafting floor speeches, tracking bills, fielding

constituents—for a \$4,000 stipend. Frank Pignaneli HBA'81 JD'84 interned in 1981, became one of the youngest Utahns ever elected to state office, and spent six years as House Democratic minority leader. “My education would not be complete without the Hinckley Institute,” he says.

Pat Jones BS'93 was less likely than most. She came back as a nontraditional student and finished her degree at 43. The institute placed her at KSL TV. “I showed up sure I'd be making copies and fetching coffee,” she says. “Instead, they handed me a morning segment to produce. That's the secret of the Hinckley Institute: They don't waste your time, and they don't let you waste theirs.” Jones ran for office, served 14 years, and became the first woman ever to lead a party caucus in either house of the Utah Legislature. “The Hinckley Institute is the crown jewel of this university,” she says.

When she left the Senate, Jones spent a decade running the Women's Leadership Institute—convincing qualified women, as she puts it, that they belonged in the room. As a supervisor, she went looking for the interns nobody else would pick: a young woman in a wheelchair, kids who didn't

ANECDOTES AND TESTIMONIALS



JIM HINCKLEY

WE'VE GOT STUDENTS IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT, IN CAMBODIA, AT THE HAGUE.

THEY DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME, AND THEY DON'T LET YOU WASTE THEIRS.

MY EDUCATION WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT THE HINCKLEY INSTITUTE.



FRANK PIGNANELLI

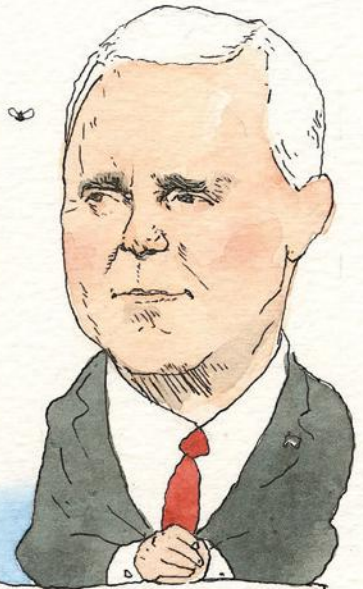


PAT JONES

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED WAS TO SHUT UP AND LISTEN.



ROB BISHOP



NEARLY 60 MILLION PEOPLE TUNED IN ON OCTOBER 7, 2020, WHEN THE INSTITUTE BROUGHT THE PENCE-HARRIS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE TO KINGSBURY HALL.

THE DECISIONS MADE IN POLITICS AFFECT OUR LIVES EVERY DAY.

THEY SHAPE THE COMMUNITIES WE LIVE IN AND THE FUTURE WE'RE BUILDING TOGETHER.

JASON PERRY

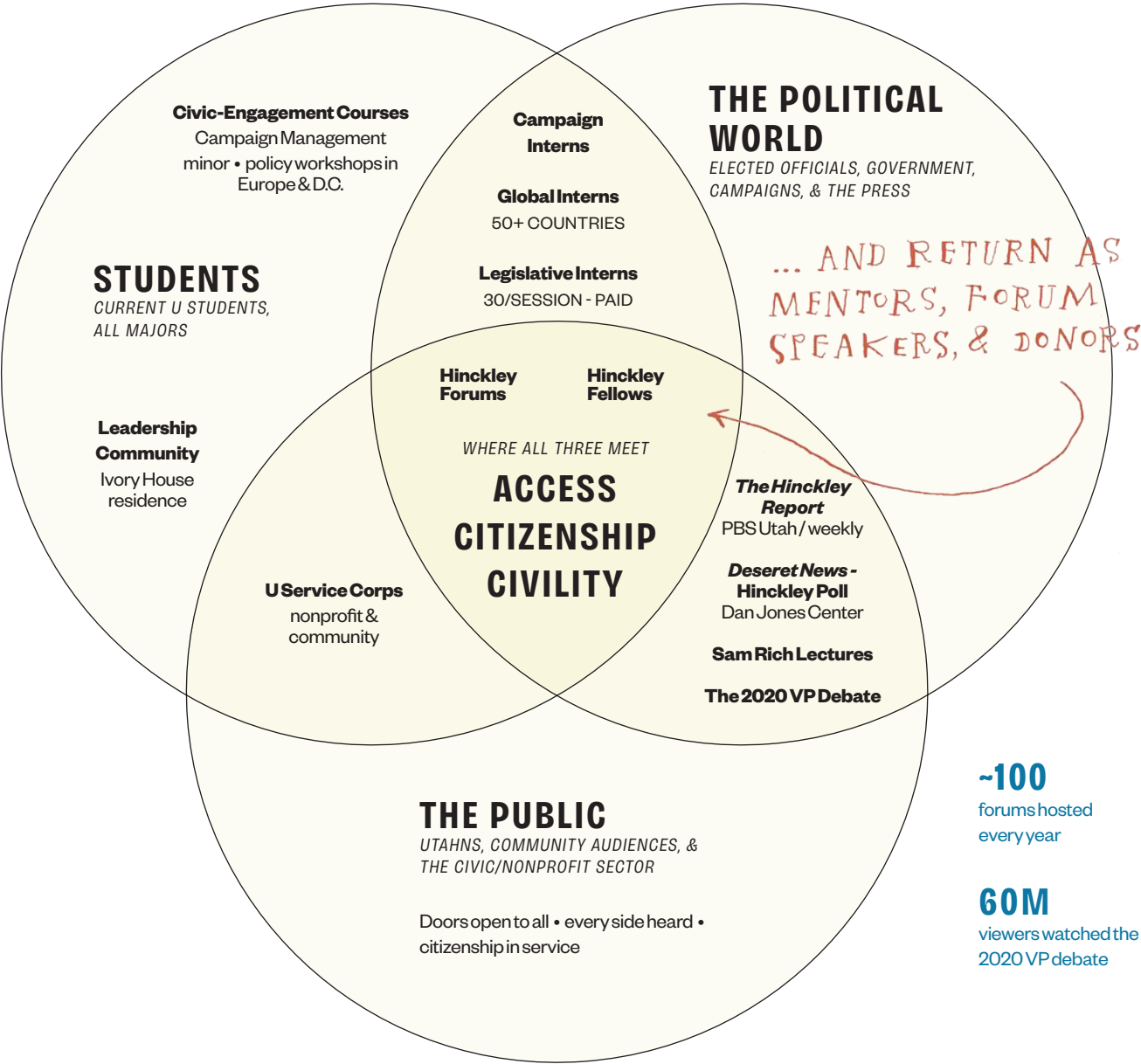


WHERE *THREE* WORLDS MEET

How a single institute serves students, the public, and the political world

2 DOZEN ALUMNI NOW HOLD ELECTED OFFICE

- 50 interns housed each semester in D.C.
- 10,000+ students interned at Hinckley since 1965
- 400+ students placed in internships a year
- ~100 students in the global program a year
- 30 interns work during Utah's 45-day legislative session



THE *DIRECTORS*

Over 60 years, six directors have shaped the Hinckley Institute into the thriving organization it is today.

J.D. Williams
1965–1975: Built the internship program—Washington, local, and legislative placements all launched by 1968

R.J. Snow BA'62 MA'64
1975–1985: Moved the institute into Orson Spencer Hall and made the Hinckley Forums a standing program

Ted Wilson BS'64
1985–2003: Launched the Huntsman Seminar for teachers and the Hall of Fame, and led 10 student expeditions to India

Ronald J. Hrebenar
Interim, 2003–2005: Drew up the plans for international internships and an applied-politics program

Kirk Jowers BA'92
2005–2015: Launched the global internship program and a campaign-management minor; tripled the number of forums

Jason Perry JD'99
2016–present: Launched *The Hinckley Report* and opened the Orrin G. Hatch Center in Washington, D.C.

look the part. “Those are the ones it changes. You don’t grow people by protecting them from the work.”

Ask Bishop—who served eight terms in the Utah House, the last as speaker, then nine in Congress—what his internship taught him, and he won’t mention policy. “The most important thing I learned was to shut up and listen,” he says. He once watched a state senator hear him all the way out, tell him he was completely right, and then vote no anyway. You have to reach more than a person’s reason, Bishop says: “You’ve got to get to the part of them that has to live with you afterward.” The building never let go of him. He proposed to his wife in that House gallery, and this spring, at 74, he went back to end his career, he says, where it started.

THE REACH

MORE THAN 100 Hinckley interns a year go to Washington, and in 2023 they got a permanent home there: the Orrin G. Hatch Center, two restored brownstones near Dupont Circle named for the senator who served Utah for 42 years—and who, for decades, took Hinckley interns into his office by the handful. Perry was one of them. Now he runs the house, which is always full. “Fifty interns every single semester,” he says. “If we do some bunk beds, it can be 52. Which it is right now.”

One recent Tuesday night, students packed the center to hear Utah congressman Blake Moore’s chief of staff speak. The crowd consisted not only of U students, but also interns from BYU, Westminster University, and Utah State. The mix is deliberate. “This is the university’s embassy in Washington,” Perry says. “We see it as our responsibility to bring all Utah students together. The network you build in a house like this is a real social network, the one that’s going to help you in your life.” There is no substitute, he says, for proximity: “There is no experience like being in that room—seeing how policy is made, the compromise that sometimes has to happen, the way leaders get to the best solutions.”

The global program is Robert Hinckley’s oldest instinct at scale—he wanted students out of Utah, Jim Hinckley says, to see the wider world and then come back. Under former director Kirk Jowers, it grew past 50 countries. In the last decade, the institute has retooled the internship program around hubs—a core group of trusted host offices where new interns land among fellow U students—matching each student’s comfort

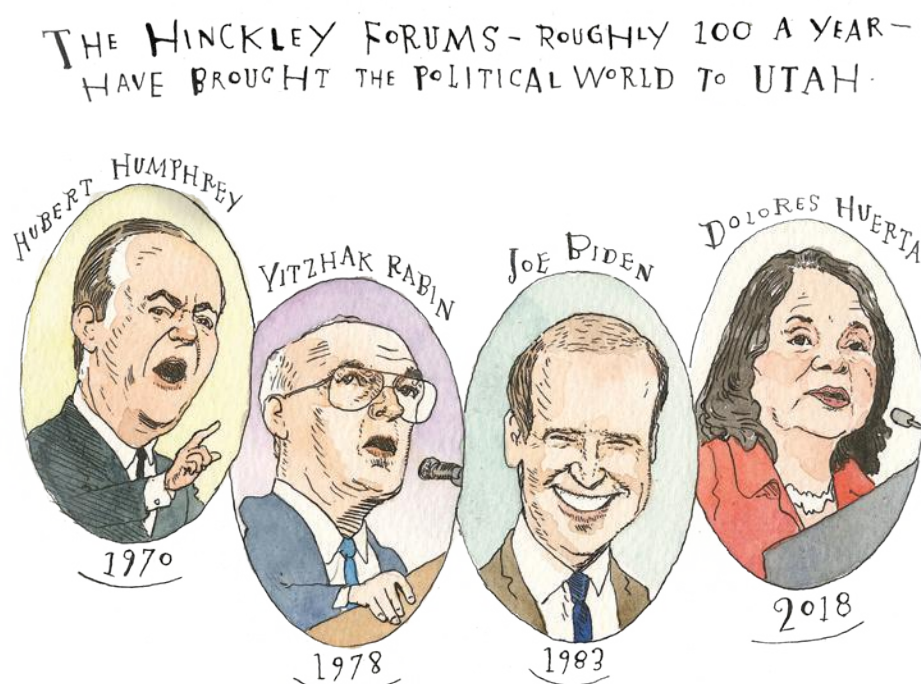
level and interests to the right posting rather than throwing a dart at a map.

Even students who never leave campus end up in the room. The Hinckley Forums—roughly 100 a year, free and open to anyone—have brought six decades of the political world to Utah, from Hubert Humphrey in 1970 to Yitzhak Rabin in 1978 to a young Joseph Biden (a 1983 Hinckley Institute Fellow) to Bob Woodward, who filled Kingsbury Hall in 2017 to discuss what he called the “final exam for democracy.”

The institute also tells Utah what it’s thinking. The monthly Hinckley poll with the *Deseret News* routinely sets the state’s agenda. A recent survey found nearly 6 in 10 voters feel neither party represents them. The poll runs through the institute’s Dan Jones Center for Public Service, named for the pollster—Pat Jones’s late husband—who taught at the U for half a century.

Every Friday since 2016, *The Hinckley Report* gathers journalists and lawmakers on PBS Utah for a half hour of deliberately civil argument—a conscious alternative to cable news. The show began when Perry sat down with the station and named the gap they could fill together: “There was no place in the state of Utah where you got a non-partisan approach to Utah politics,” he says. “How do we model civic dialogue? How do we talk about Utah issues in a way that when you finish an episode, you understand both sides of the argument—and you see how to have those same conversations at your own family dinner table?” Ten seasons and a regional Emmy later, the formula holds.

Once, the whole country tuned in. On October 7, 2020, the institute brought the Pence–Harris vice-presidential debate to



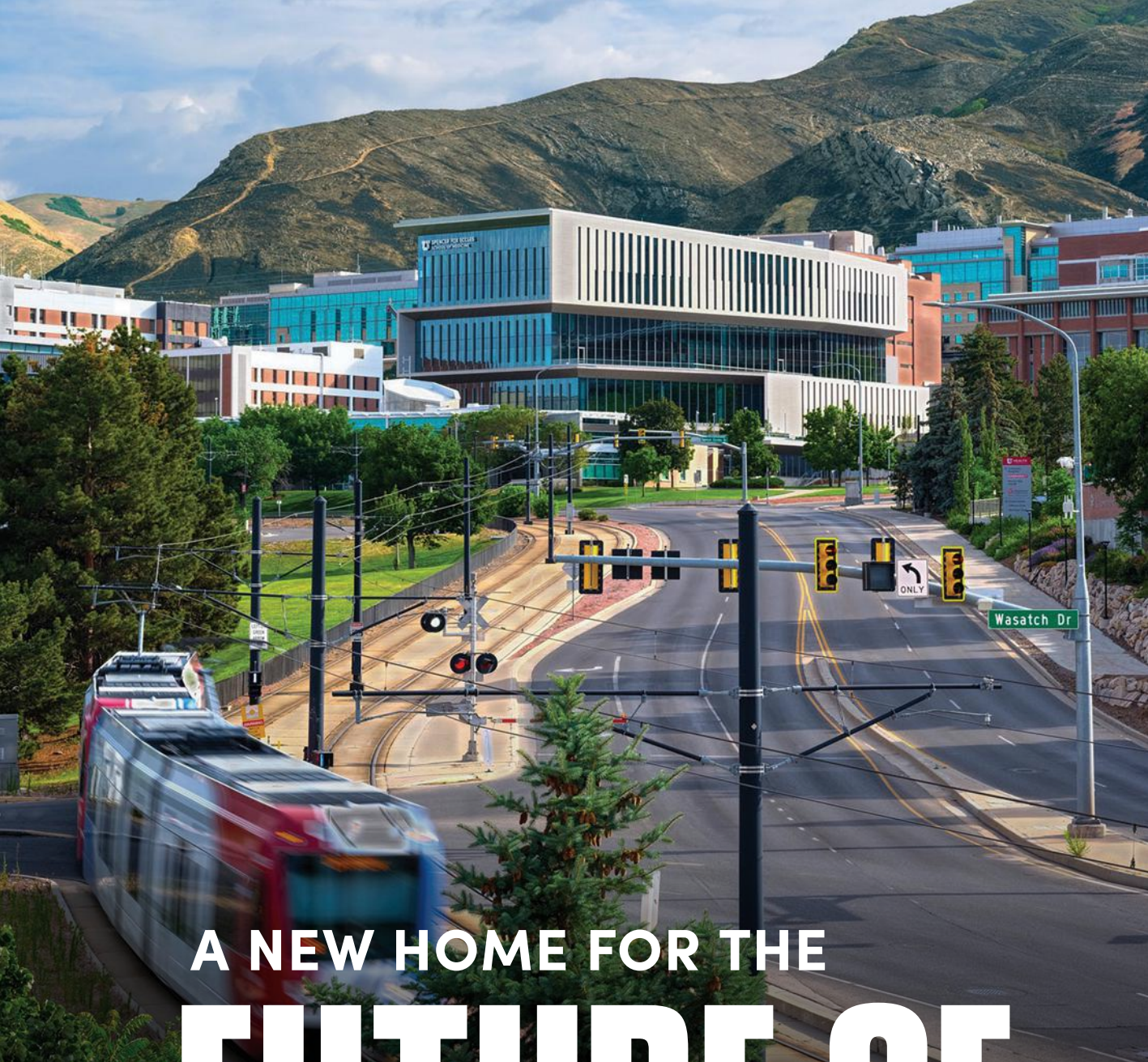
Kingsbury Hall, staged behind pandemic plexiglass and watched by nearly 60 million people. There were exactly 60 student tickets—the hottest seats on campus.

The institute keeps finding new rooms to put students in: lately, a residential Leadership Community that puts public service-minded students on scholarship, and a U Service Corps that places students with nonprofits, schools, and public agencies.

The trouble Hinckley diagnosed in 1965—a country beginning to treat politics as beneath its best people—is not exactly solved; his institute’s own poll says as much. Perry does not flinch from the modern version. “Our mission is perhaps more critical than it’s ever been,” he says. “It is so easy to want to disengage, in a world where almost everything pushes our students to pick up a political flag one way or another—or to decide not to be part of it at all. That would be the mistake.” And he is unembarrassed about the recruiting pitch buried in the founding premise. “Do we need good people in office now more than ever? Yes, and we would love those people to be Hinckley interns.”

Sixty years in, the Hinckley Institute reaches places its founder never could have imagined, says Jim Hinckley. “We’ve got students in the British Parliament, in Cambodia, at The Hague. We’ve got forums anybody can walk into, a show on PBS every week. It started with a handful of interns and a seminar room. I could never dream up where it’ll be in 60 more years.” **U**

Seth Bracken is editor of Utah Magazine.



A NEW HOME FOR THE

FUTURE OF MEDICINE

THE NEW SPENCER FOX ECCLES SCHOOL OF MEDICINE BUILDING IS NOW OPEN—PREPARING FUTURE PROVIDERS TO SERVE OUR GROWING COMMUNITIES.

By 2050, Utah's population will reach 5 million. To keep pace, University of Utah Health is expanding how and where it trains physicians, so more families across the region can access the research-driven care patients need.

Every floor of the new building is designed around one idea: preparing students for what they'll face in practice. Learning studios, adaptive classrooms, an advanced simulation center, high-tech labs, and collaborative common areas equip students with the skills and knowledge they need when a real patient's life is on the line.

Along with the new physical space is the spirit of innovation and collaboration this facility helps create. Sitting at the heart of the health campus, the building is only steps away from the Mountain West's leading academic health center. This proximity invites learners, faculty, and medical professionals across disciplines to work together in carrying medical sciences and patient care forward.

It's one piece of a larger commitment. Paired with a new campus in St. George and ongoing efforts to expand educational partnerships in the region, University of Utah Health is strengthening the medical workforce, quality of care, and quality of life for generations.



This achievement would not be possible without a historic gift from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation and the Nora Eccles Treadwell Foundation.

MĀLAMĀ



From foster care to dual doctorates, **Adonica Kauwe Tuitama's** path was driven by Hawaiian values and a commitment to her Pacific Islander community.

& KŌKUA



Kōkua is
what you do.

Mālama is why you
keep doing it.

When she was 12 years old and living in foster care, Adonica Ihilani Kauwe Tuitama took her paper route money and bought a life insurance policy. It was a concept she had overheard grownups talking about, and she figured that if something happened to her, at least her younger siblings would be OK.

She wasn't so much a worrier as a problem-solver, a little girl whose impulse was to help the people she cared about.

Caregiving, indeed, has been the drive that has propelled her in the decades since then, culminating this year in two doctoral degrees from the University of Utah's College of Nursing—a PhD in nursing and a doctor of nursing practice (DNP). With those dual credentials, her goal is to help Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities live healthier lives.

Two Hawaiian words explain how she moves through the world. Mālama means to care for something—to protect it, to tend it, to keep it whole. Kōkua means to help, to put your hands under someone else's burden. Neither is a favor you grant when it's convenient. "They go together," Kauwe Tuitama says. "Kōkua is what you do. Mālama is why you keep doing it."

As a teenager, Kauwe Tuitama dreamed of going to medical school, but her high school guidance counselor made it clear this was an unreasonable aspiration, even though she was a B+ student. Feeling like an outsider, Kauwe Tuitama chose to graduate from high school at 15 so she could work full time. By 18, she was married and working three jobs. By 27, she had left an abusive relationship and was a single mother with two small children and one on the way, still working three jobs. Hoping to change her life trajectory, she enrolled in college.

Michelle Taylor MSW'95 MPA'02 PhD'02, former Utah Valley University vice president for Student Affairs, first met Kauwe Tuitama when she hired her as a math tutor for her son; she was so impressed, she later hired her as a vice-presidential intern. "If you give her a project," says Taylor, "she magnifies it," not just solving the problem at hand but creating a process so that other problems can be solved in the future. There are typically two types of people, Taylor philosophizes: "Those who see the broad picture, and those who see all the details you need to get there. But Adonica sees both."

On the other hand, there was a level of naivete. Taylor remembers one late night when the two of them were working on a project, Kauwe Tuitama's three children asleep under a desk in Taylor's office.

Suddenly, Kauwe Tuitama broke down in tears. "I haven't even started my homework yet, and I'm so tired," she confessed. "I don't understand how people do this. As hard as I try, I can't seem to be full time in school." By "full time," Taylor discovered, Kauwe Tuitama thought everyone else was taking 40 credit hours a semester. "Because she was so gifted and bright, people assumed she knew how college worked," Taylor remembers. "But she didn't know. She didn't have anyone to pick it up from."

In 2013, also unaware that most students were content to have just one major, Kauwe Tuitama graduated from UVU with two: accounting and nursing. By then, she had come to realize that if she wanted to make a broader impact on health care, nursing, and policy, pursuing a PhD would be an essential next step. As a Native Hawaiian woman, she says, she was concerned that she would otherwise "be put in my place."

She set her sights on the U's College of Nursing but discovered that, to be considered, she would first need a master's degree. So she got an MBA. Then, in 2016, she became the first person accepted in the college's brand-new dual doctorate program.

She earned both the clinical doctorate (DNP) and the research

doctorate (PhD) so she could bring evidence, clinical experience, and the voice of nursing to the tables where health policy is decided in Utah and across the country.



WHEN IT CAME TIME TO PICK a dissertation topic, Kauwe Tuitama knew what she wanted to tackle: the astronomically high rate of diabetes in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations—among the highest rates in the world.

As she surveyed the literature, she discovered the cultural barriers that make treating and even studying diabetes difficult in Pacific Islander populations. "The research has not always been kind, historically," she says. There are assumptions, even among doctors and researchers, that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have more diabetes "because people are fat, lazy, and don't eat right," she says—assumptions that don't take into account Pacific Ocean nuclear testing that contaminated food sources, or the flooding of Stateside food into Indigenous diets, or the fact that the standard BMI measurement does not take into account the bigger bone mass of Polynesian bodies.

Often, too, the terminology in scientific papers was perplexing. If, let's say, you're trying to find out some of the struggles and challenges that face people who are caring for their family members, most of the scientific literature files it under the heading "caregiver burden." No wonder she needed help decoding this; no one in her culture, she says, would ever use the word "burden" about caring for others.

**Kauwe Tuitama received the following scholarships and fellowships between 2016 and 2024: ARUP Graduate Fellowship Initiative (2018–21); A. Kyle and Lael S. Bettilyon Legacy Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2020); Castle Foundation Diversity Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2023–24); Catherine Mercy Brown Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2023–24); Dick & Timmy Burton Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2021); Frederick Q. Lawson Graduate Fellows Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2016–18, 2022–23); Intermountain Healthcare Diversity Scholarship in the College of Nursing at the University of Utah (2021); Jack R. and Hazel M. Robertson Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2021–22); Ray and Tye Noorda Scholarship in Geriatric Nursing (2021–24); Peggy Lynn Aldrich Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2023–24); Richard L. and Joanne S. McGillis Endowed Scholarship in the College of Nursing (2021–22).*

Kauwe Tuitama gives credit to the academics and others who have helped her at every turn—women she calls her “angels,” including Michelle Taylor, mentor Nicci Young, the U’s Carrie Radmall BS’02 and Paula Meek in the College of Nursing, and Heidi Brett and Lorelei Rutledge MBA’19 at the U’s J. Willard Marriott Library. It was Rutledge who taught Kauwe Tuitama to use EndNote as she organized six six-inch binders of print-outs and created hundreds of citations.

“I think she’s a brilliant medical practitioner,” Rutledge says about Kauwe Tuitama. “She’s truly dedicated to helping her patients. She wants to not only do research but to be their nurse practitioner.”

Kauwe Tuitama explains her desire to get the dual doctorates this way: “I’m a firm believer that clinical work feeds research, and research feeds clinical work.” But, she says, the “translational” link between the two is sometimes missing. “I’m hoping I can help bridge that gap.”

In 2016, as she began working on her doctorates, she was living in Samoa, where she was also working full time as principal investigator with a company researching strep and impetigo in children. She herself was suffering from a blood disorder that sometimes meant being hooked up to an IV bag as she drove from patient to patient. She was also volunteering as a nurse for LDS missionaries on the island. And in the midst of all this, the island flooded, leaving her without electricity and running water for two weeks. “Lots of other people would have crawled under a rock and given up,” says Radmall, doctoral program manager. “But she has persevered.”

When Kauwe Tuitama moved back to Utah in 2019, she took on other full-time jobs, ran her own floral business, volunteered at Habitat for Humanity, served as an Emerging Scholar with the American Diabetes Association, took care of her aging parents, got married, went through in vitro fertilization, and gave birth to a little girl.

No surprise, then, that for years before she defended her dissertation last spring, she averaged three or four hours of sleep a night.



KAUWE TUITAMA HOPES TO address “the guilt, shame, and blame” surrounding diabetes in the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, expanding on the work done by researchers such as Pearl McElfish and Joseph Kaholokula.

Kaholokula, professor and chair of Native Hawaiian health at the University



Kauwe Tuitama (second from right) with, from left, daughter Letelelanuola, sons Iosepa and Makanaolani, son Kapono (in the framed photo), and husband Nuumativa. Kapono is serving a mission in Samoa for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

of Hawaii’s medical school and a member of Kauwe Tuitama’s PhD committee, stresses that there are better health outcomes when a community’s strengths are recognized and honored. Instead of simply urging islanders to “exercise more,” for example, why not encourage them to do hula dancing? “It’s not only a good form of exercise,” notes Kauwe Tuitama, “it also connects us to our families and ancestors, and there’s a spiritual side as well.”

In the U.S., says Kauwe Tuitama, the medical community tends to look at health “compartmentally” and to think of medicine as “person-centered,” rather than considering a patient’s and a community’s mental and spiritual health. “But where I come from, it’s very holistic.” Family and church, she says, are not seen as separate from physical health but are “integrated to the core of who people are.”

“We as health care workers would do better learning from our community, instead of thinking we know all,” she adds.

She is quick to point out that none of it was earned alone. Alongside the mentors were the donors behind more than a dozen scholarships and fellowships, beginning with the Frederick Q. Lawson Graduate Fellows Scholarship the year she entered the dual doctorate program. “Others lifted me, and I have done my best to honor their generosity,” she says. “Without their belief in me, without their financial support, I would not have been able to achieve this.” It’s *kōkua* made literal—hands under someone else’s burden—and she hopes her story does for the next student what those gifts did for her.

Kauwe Tuitama currently works as a nurse administrator, volunteers at the secondhand store UGLY’s Closet (Utah Girls Love You), and twice a month hands out food at 5 a.m. at the Utah Food Bank. “I was taught from a very young age,” she says, “that service is our rent for our space on earth.” Asked what her favorite job is, she starts to answer, stops, then explains: “I don’t want to say I love helping people, because that changes the power dynamic. But I love manifesting the greatness of God that’s in everyone, no matter what I’m doing. I can be changing a bandage, talking to someone who is suicidal, actually saving someone’s life,” she says. “It’s all meaningful to me.” **U**

Elaine Jarvik is a Salt Lake City-based freelance writer and playwright.



Joy, in Rhythm

How a U duo grew into one of the state's most ambitious jazz experiments

The dancers found the beat before the horns even settled. On a warm evening at the Gallivan Center this summer, dozens of people spilled across the plaza as Hot House West—14 players deep, a singer out front—launched into something fast, bright, and unmistakably alive. A social with food and art vendors had opened the night, followed by a swing dance performance and competition. Then newcomers were taught some basic swing steps. By the time the band hit its stride, the line between audience and performance had pleasantly dissolved.

Hot House West is a Salt Lake swing band that plays vintage, danceable jazz—high-energy music with roots in 1930s Paris and the American songbook. “We go for joy,” says Nathan Royal BMU’14, the band’s founder and executive director. “It’s always exuberant, always joyful.”

The story starts at the U. In December of his first semester, Royal caught hot-jazz guitarist Frank Vignola at a JazzSLC concert and walked out knowing exactly what he wanted to play. He and fellow guitarist James Martak BMU’14 MPA’23 started a combo the next day, called it the Hot Club of Zion, took it

seriously, and played wherever they could.

The U, Royal says, is where the connections got made. He met Martak—now his board chairman—in the jazz program. Mentors passed along gigs. Dedicated rehearsal time and a built-in network turned two students into a working band. “A lot of our early gigs came through the U,” he says.

A decade and a couple of names later—Hot Club of Zion became Hot House West after graduation—the group has grown into something far larger. Restructured as a nonprofit in 2023, it now anchors the orchestra, a record label, and its own jazz festival. Royal’s ambition is unapologetic: he wants Hot House West to be a true arts institution, the way Utah Symphony and Ballet West are, and to make Salt Lake a much bigger jazz destination. He’s watched too many talented friends leave for L.A. or Nashville, sure a real career lived elsewhere. He’d like to reverse the current. “I don’t see any reason,” he says, “why this couldn’t be one of the great music scenes in the country.” On a warm night at the Gallivan, with the rhythm still swinging and the dancers still going, it’s hard to argue.

ALUMNI NEWS ROUNDUP



Second Alumni Day of Service

On Saturday, May 16, members from 12 U Alumni chapters around the country came together to clean up, support, and provide for their local communities during the second annual National Day of Service. Alumni from San Diego to New York City contributed more than 170 total hours of hands-on volunteer work at food banks, environmental cleanups, and community nonprofits.



U Alumni Take London

One of the world’s great cultural capitals hosted U alumni for 10 days during the London on Stage: Alumni Edition trip from Go Learn, Continuing Education’s guided travel series. Nights at the theater capped days spent strolling through museums, historic sites, and the English countryside. Watch for news about the next alumni Go Learn trip at alumni.utah.edu.



Dinks and Drinks Classic

Pickleballers and spectators gathered at Second Summit Cider in June for U Alumni’s first-ever co-ed pickleball tournament, benefiting the Huntsman Mental Health Foundation. Attendees enjoyed a day of friendly competition as well as food trucks, drinks, prizes, and a marketplace of alumni-owned businesses.

Visit alumni.utah.edu for upcoming events.

Cooking with Amore

Food is “a love language that binds generations,” says Elena Davis BA’06 of recipe website *CucinaByElena.com*. Born in Italy, she came to the United States as a child so her parents could work on the Human Genome Project at the U. But summers were—and still are—spent back home in Sardinia, where the extended family comes together at every meal.

“Our grandparents ingrained it into us that we sit at the table and spend time together,” she says. A teacher for 13 years, Davis found her way to food blogging during the pandemic, when travel bans had her longing for those Sardinian family meals.

“I just wanted to fill that void and share it with the world,” she says. Now, she’s a full-time recipe developer, food blogger, and storyteller. Here, she shares a few insights.

You say Italian recipes don’t have to be complicated.

That’s one comment I get the most about my recipes—how simple and easy they are, while being out-of-this-world delicious. The beauty of Italian cooking is the quality of ingredients. When you have good ingredients, you cut your time in half.

What do people get wrong about authentic Italian cuisine?

It’s not heavily garlic-based. Italian American cooking is, because when Italian immigrants came to the United States and started opening restaurants, garlic was a cheap ingredient that added a lot of flavor. As Italian American cooking grew, it diverged quite a bit from authentic Italian cooking.

What should home cooks look for in Italian ingredients?

Try to use whole ingredients that you know the source of. For pasta, look for bronze-cut, slow-dried, and made of organic semolina. Durum wheat semolina and water should be the only two ingredients. Olive oil should be in a dark glass bottle and should be from a single source. For produce, try to do organic as much as possible, and buy in season. Seasonality is a big thing in Italy—we’re not eating oranges in summer.



Web Extra Find recipes for pear cake, carbonara, and more, along with a link to Davis’s favorite Italian pantry staples, at magazine.utah.edu/cucina.

The U in Your Pocket

Want to see what's happening at the U? Looking for parking on campus? Need football tickets? The Utah 360 mobile app puts it all in one place. Launched last year, it's designed to simplify the way you connect with the university.

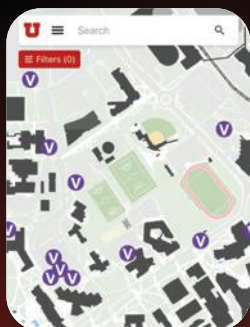
Utah 360 replaces five university apps: Mobile U, One U, Utah Tickets, Utah 360 (Athletics), and Utah Alumni. Because it serves everyone from students to visitors, customization is key, says Sarah Williams, senior product manager in the Office of the Chief Operating Officer.

"You have the capability of personalizing your whole experience," she explains.

Follow a few onboarding prompts to tell the app who you are and what you like. If you're an alum who follows Utah Gymnastics and attends Pioneer Theatre Company, for example, your dashboard and menu will display your alumni ID card, the Red Rocks schedule, and PTC's current season. Take a peek at a few of the features in this all-encompassing tool, then visit utah360.utah.edu to learn more and download the app.

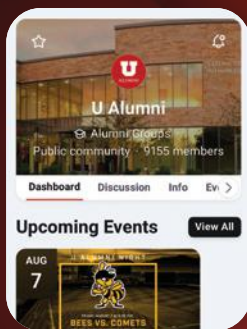
Parking

Find campus parking areas, buy permits, and see which lots have available spaces.



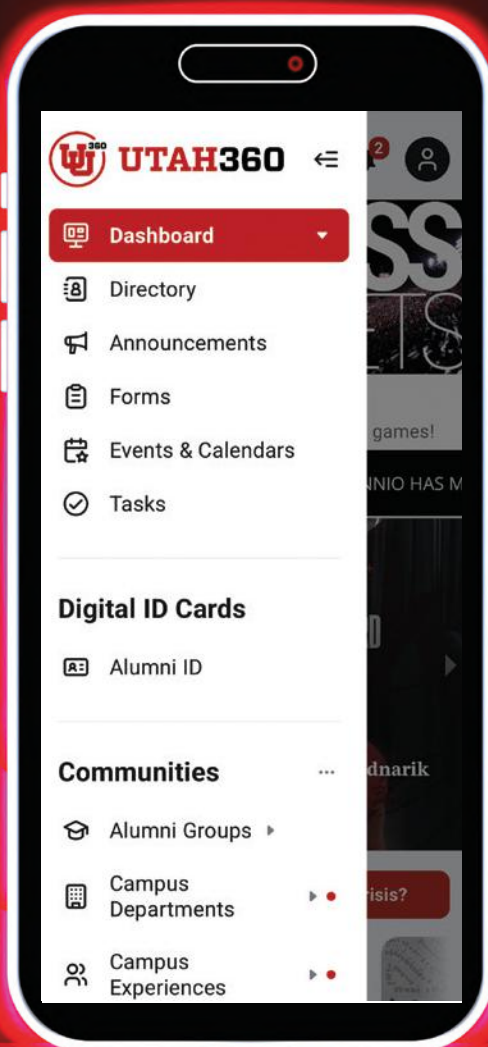
Communities

Join groups like U Alumni to browse events, join discussions, and stay connected.



Athletics

Buy and manage tickets, prepare for game day, find Utah merch, and more.



My Calendars

- ☒ Academic Deadlines
- ☒ Athletics Calendar
- ☐ Bennion Community Center Events
- ☐ Campus Rec
- ☒ Campus Rec Trips and Summits
- ☐ Center for Business Health, and Prosperity
- ☐ Center for Campus Wellness
- ☐ Center for Community &...

Calendar

Build a personalized view of the events you care about.

Alumni ID Card

Flash your digital Alumni ID card to get 20% off at the Campus Store (some exclusions apply).



Announcements

- ▶ Sent ✕ Expired
- Show: All
- ✓ Mark all as read
- New Wifi experience for Campus Guests**
- UIT to implement OpenRoaming and Passpoint for University of Utah guests on 5/12/2026
- University IT will implement

Announcements

Receive campus safety alerts and university updates.



Rushing Toward His Dreams

A Utah superfan turned a dorm-room hobby into a national college football media company

Don't let his Provo roots fool you. Skyler Sorenson BS'25 may have grown up one block from LaVell Edwards Stadium, but he's a diehard Utah fan. His passion for Utah Football was so great, in fact, that it led to a career. Sorenson is the founder of Field Rush, a national college football platform with more than 220,000 Instagram followers. And he launched it from his dorm room. The idea took shape during a rough period in Sorenson's first year at the U.

"I felt lost," he says. "I had played basketball my whole life, and when I got to college, I felt like I didn't have a purpose anymore. I wanted to give myself something to focus on."

So he followed his other passion: creating content about Utah Football. As he poured himself into the project, it gained a legitimate following. A business major in the David Eccles School of Business, Sorenson also found himself drawn to entrepreneurship classes. "I was inspired to start thinking about how I could turn Field Rush into a full-fledged business," he says.

As Field Rush grew, Sorenson built a team of content creators.

Then came a breakout moment. The crew posted a graphic of a fictional football helmet for the University of Idaho, rebranding the Idaho Vandals as the "Fightin' Taters." The joke went viral, catching the attention of Idaho's creative team.

"They reached out and said, 'We want this for a game,'" Sorenson says. Field Rush helped finalize the design, and the helmet was featured on ESPN's College GameDay. "I never thought merchandise or design collaborations would be part of our business, but here we are."

That success led Sorenson to the Doman Innovation Studio, an incubator at the Eccles School that helps entrepreneurs turn ideas into sustainable businesses. He credits its director, Cord Bowen, with giving him the confidence to pursue Field Rush full time after graduation.

"I just want to build this with my team and keep celebrating the sport I love," Sorenson says. "Our slogan is 'Rush That Damn Field,' which, to us, means chase your damn dreams. That's exactly what I'm doing."



Field Rush content creators Brennan McKellar (left) and Kyle Little show off Fightin' Taters merch at the University of Idaho.

Class Notes

'80s



Kate Kendell

Kate Kendell JD'88 is the new CEO of the Gill Foundation, one of the preeminent national financial supporters of LGBTQ issues in the country. Kendell is a former executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, where she spent 23 years advocating for LGBTQ people and their families.

'90s

Mike Mower JD'93 is now the longest-serving senior staffer in any governor's office in America and has been part of three Utah governors' administrations. Currently Gov. Spencer Cox's senior advisor for community relations, Mower first joined the staff of Gov. Jon Huntsman, Jr. in 2005. His previous stints included two years with Legal Aid Society of Salt Lake; a year as a congressional staffer in Washington, D.C.; and service as director of community and government relations for the city of Provo. He notes, "My daughter Abigail Mower Rampton graduated from Utah Law in 2023, so it's fun to have a multi-generational family perspective. The S.J. Quinney College of Law has trained a couple of generations of us, and we're all much better off because of the education we've had there."



Larry Menlove

Larry Menlove BA'96 is publishing his debut novel this fall. A literary crime noir set in the Rush Valley in Utah's West Desert, *Rush* was developed from a short story that won the 2012 Utah Original Writing Competition. Featuring numerous ne'er-do-well characters caught up in drug dealing, human coyoting, and steamy late-night shenanigans, the novel was described by one contest judge as a cross between a Cormac McCarthy book and a Coen Brothers film. Menlove's writing has appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *Sunstone*, *Dialogue*, and other venues. He recently retired after nearly 30 years in the library industry.

Heidi Nestel JD'97 has spent more than 20 years leading the Utah Crime Victims Legal Clinic (UCVLC), which provides free legal services and other resources to crime victims statewide. "Victims' rights" was a brand-new area of law when Nestel started law school, pioneered by U professor Paul Cassell. She dove into it immediately, eventually representing abused and neglected children in court, and then prosecuting domestic violence and other special victim crimes cases, before being recruited to start the UCVLC. The clinic also works to create good case law defining victims' rights, continuing to work closely with Professor Cassell. "He understands how to argue and bring these issues to the appellate courts," Nestel explains. "When there's an adverse ruling that hurts victims' rights, we ask Paul to help us appeal it. He has done it masterfully."

'10s



Ashley Gregson

Ashley Gregson JD'11 is president of Women Lawyers of Utah, which works to support and advance female attorneys and all women in Utah. Gregson serves as assistant general counsel at Dentons Durham Jones Pinegar, P.C., and on its board of directors, and she has served on the board of the WLU for many years. "We are fortunate in Utah to have such an active and close legal community, and the women in that legal community are exceptional," Gregson comments. "Growing our numbers in the Bar and expanding women's roles in every corner of the legal profession is key."



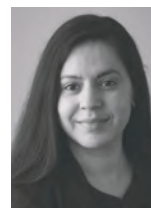
Elli Legerski

Elli Legerski BA'12 BA'12 produced the satirical short film *Jane Austen's Period Drama*, which recently received an Oscar shortlist nomination for Best Live Action Short. At the U, Legerski landed jobs with acclaimed filmmakers including Peter Jackson. She now produces and writes full time, with her projects having premiered at Sundance, SXSW, Tribeca, Outfest, and Sitges.



Adam Kuban

Adam Kuban PhD'12 was recognized as the 2026 Journalism & Mass Communication Teacher of the Year in the Scripps Howard Journalism Awards, among the nation's top competitions. A professor at Ball State University, Kuban is known for leading media-based, community-engaged projects, including books, magazines, websites, and apps, often focused on science- or sports-related issues. As co-creator of Water Quality Indiana, which brings together science and journalism students to explore water issues, he led a documentary project that earned two regional Emmy nominations. He is also a high school tennis coach.



Claudia Quintero

Claudia Quintero MS'13 was selected as a recipient of the Fearless Women Award by the Springfield (Mass.) Symphony Orchestra in recognition of her advocacy for underprivileged communities. She was also recognized with the Legal Services Award from the Massachusetts Bar Association for her excellence in advocacy and legal services to low-income and indigent communities as director of Central West Justice Center. Quintero joined the center in 2017 right out of law school. She also teaches at Western New England University College of Law and co-leads the Fairness for Farmworkers Coalition.



Susan McCarty

Susan McCarty PhD'13 has published a new book, *2008*. The novel historically, politically, and artistically considers its time: the dawn of social media, the heyday of the blog, the year the bottom fell out of the American economy while the country was on the verge of a historic election. Also author of the short-story collection *Anatomies* and numerous essays, McCarty is an associate professor of creative writing at Oakland University, in the Detroit area.



Akintunde Akinjoro

Physician **Akintunde Akinjoro** MS'15 notes that his diagnostic approach was shaped by the transformative mentorship and scientific training he received

at the U. "Most importantly, hypothesis testing became a guiding skill. This skill has significantly shaped both my personal and professional life over the past decade," he says. "As a critical care physician, I currently approach each case with curiosity and care. Every patient inspires new questions, and I employ reflective thinking and scientific rigor to find the most effective answers."

SPOTLIGHT



Nicole Walker MFA'01 PhD'06 recently published *How to Plant a Billion Trees: A Memoir of Childhood Trauma and the Healing Power of Nature*. Walker was molested by a babysitter and found herself pregnant at age 11. But thanks to a supportive web of family, friends, and the forests and mountains of the West, her life did not fall apart. In *A Billion Trees*, Walker employs the forest as a model to understand how her life connects with the world, examining the way that ecosystems anticipate, react, and support each small part of the whole. Walker has written numerous essays for *The New York Times*, appears in several editions of *Best American Essays*, and previously authored books including the poetry collection *This Noisy Egg* and (fittingly) *How to Write the Hard Stuff: Turning Difficult Subjects into Meaningful Prose*. Now a married mother of two and an activist for reproductive choice, Walker teaches creative writing and serves as Writer-in-Residence for the Center for Ecosystem Science and Society at Northern Arizona University.

SPOTLIGHT



During her senior year at the U, **Lexa Daniels** BFA'13 was cast as Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake*. During a press performance before the show opened, she broke the second metatarsal in her right foot. Remarkably, she was able to finish the performance by modifying the choreography on the fly. But she was put in a cast and never got the chance to perform during the production. Daniels rehabilitated with Portland Ballet in Maine for a year, then obtained a trainee position with Louisville Ballet. In 2016, she was accepted into the company, where she has grown to become a premier dancer. This year, Daniels was again cast as Odette/Odile, and 13 years out from that devastating injury, she received standing ovations performing her dream role before two sold-out audiences.

Aaron Wade JD'17 is the director of Gilmore & Bell, P.C.'s Salt Lake City office. Wade has practiced law as a municipal bond attorney since 2017 with a focus on tax-exempt financings for state agencies, municipalities, and special districts in Utah and throughout the West. At the S.J. Quinney College of Law, he served as a note and comment editor for the *Utah Law Review*.



Yitian "Chloe" Zeng

Yitian "Chloe" Zeng MAE'17 was senior project designer on the mobile and tablet app project EcoEat, which recently received a Red Dot Design Award, one of the world's most prestigious international design honors. The project addresses sustainable and socially responsible concepts for reducing food waste and responsible consumption through de-

sign and technology. Zeng is a full-time product designer.

'20s



Seyyed Sharifi

Seyyed Sharifi BS'20 MED'24 represented Utah in the national America's Favorite Teacher competition, placing fifth in the quarterfinals. Sharifi is a special education teacher in Granite School District, working with post-high school students who have significant disabilities. He was previously recognized as the 2024 Granite School District Teacher of the Year, a 2025 Utah State Teacher of the Year finalist, the U's Outstanding Public Educator for 2025, and a 2025 national Discovery Education Teacher of the Year.



Satin Tashnizi

Satin Tashnizi HBA'20 is the vice president chief of staff for Apple Card Operations for Goldman Sachs as well as the executive director of the Salt Lake City-based Emerald Project, which she cofounded. The Emerald Project is dedicated to empowering young Muslims through civic engagement and service. Over the past nine years, the organization has built bridges across communities while supporting young people in developing confidence, agency, and belonging. Tashnizi credits the U's Hinckley Institute with providing her with the skills and confidence to build something new, and lasting, for the community.

Three U of U College of Fine Arts alumni were involved in a new play that debuted in New York City this spring at Arts on Site. *Weapon in Waiting* is based on a true story about the creation of the Women's Flying Training Detachment and the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron during WWII. **Keira Mathews** BFA'21 wrote the play, **Abigail Rebekah** BFA'21 directed the debut, and **Hayley Cassity** BFA'20 performed as an original cast member.

Hannah Hazlett BS'26 is a new marketing events specialist at VLCM. Her very first day of freshman year, Hazlett began working in event planning and

marketing at U Alumni, and she credits what was once a "random" job with helping her discover her passion for the events industry. While at the U, she also became a regular face on the university's official TikTok and spent a summer studying abroad in France through the U's Eccles Global program. Having grown up as a competitive dancer, she also served for three years as vice president of the U's Dance Club student organization. "The University of Utah has given me lifelong friendships, career opportunities, and some of the best memories of my life," she says.



Arden Cook

Arden Cook HBS'26 is now a local entity specialist at the Lieutenant Governor's Office, where he oversees municipal annexations and incorporation, advising on local boundary adjustments and state code compliance. Previously, Cook was a legislative intern and a Salt Lake City Council intern. At the U, he was involved with the Associated Students of the University of Utah and in Hinckley Institute of Politics internships.



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SPOTLIGHT



Tenor **José Miguel Santelices** DMA'23 (center) recently enjoyed a successful debut tour in China and Taiwan that unexpectedly turned into a University of Utah reunion. At a spring recital at Fuyang Normal University, featuring Spanish-language, Italian, and Chinese repertoire, Santelices was joined by pianist **Zhangyu Chen** DMA'25 (at right) and **Yanqi Wang** DMA'24 (left), who served as page-turner. Holding a doctorate in voice performance, with a secondary concentration in opera production/direction, Santelices is founder and artistic director of VOCES Academy of the Arts, a vocal studio in Garland, Texas, and regularly collaborates with Utah-based Opera Contempo (founded by **Mandi Barrus** MMU'19), which is dedicated to centering under-represented stories in opera. Through his Santelices Foundation, he also launched the Colchagua Vocal Institute, an intensive program that trains singers and pianists in Hispanic repertoire. The institute led a free Latin American art song master class in Salt Lake City this past March in conjunction with Opera Contempo, and a second edition of the institute is planned for January 2027. His foundation also held its first anniversary concert at the Meadows Museum in Dallas in April.

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Still Soaring

This year, the U celebrated the 30th birthday of its No. 1 fan. According to legend, Swoop the red-tailed hawk hatched from a brown-speckled egg in the foothills of the Wasatch, roaming the skies until he found his home at the University of Utah. In reality, Swoop was born from the university's commitment to respectfully honor the Ute Indian Tribe. Tribal members helped select the red-tailed hawk, a native Utah species with cultural significance for the tribe, as the U's new mascot.

Swoop debuted on January 2, 1996, at a Utah-BYU basketball game, where he introduced himself by showing off his dunking skills. Swoop is the life of the party at every U celebration, on campus and off. He's even shown up at weddings. His many adventures include skydiving, traveling across the country with Utah Football, ringing the bell on Wall Street, and defeating Cincinnati's Bearcat last year to become the reigning WWE Mascot Battle Royal champion. Read his origin story, learn about Swoop's Club for kids, and find out how to request his presence at swoop.utah.edu.

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