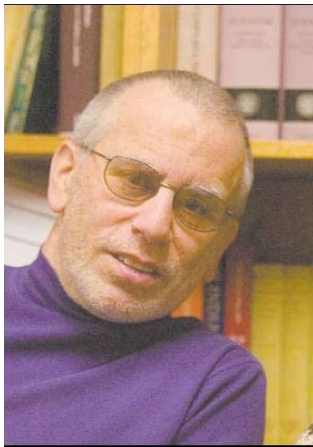


# *Buddhism scholar new Religious Studies head*

By Kim Burgess staff writer



Alan Murray/Herald Journal

Utah State University's Buddhism scholar has been named head of the school's Religious Studies program.

Charles S. Prebish has been part of the program since 2006 and holds the Charles Redd Chair in Religious Studies.

Prebish is well known for helping establish the study of Western Buddhism as a sub-discipline in Buddhist studies. Before coming to USU in 2007, Prebish taught at Pennsylvania State University for more than 35 years. He has published 19 books and more than 50 scholarly articles and chapters.

"When Charles Prebish was hired, it was clear he had the energy and imagination to build a cutting-edge program," said Norm Jones, USU's

history department head and the previous head of the Religious Studies Program. "He has the skill to continue organizing the program and letting it grow. ... He is someone who has spent a lifetime thinking about these issues."

The interdisciplinary Religious Studies program, which was established in 2005, offers the only degree of its kind in the Intermountain West.

Students began to be admitted to the program in 2006, and Jones said they have been enthusiastic, establishing a Religious Studies Club on their own initiative.

"At this point, we have enrolled the number of majors we anticipated," Jones continued. "We have just touched the tip of the program's potential growth."

In addition to Prebish, the program has added Phil Barlow as the Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture. In that position, Barlow is the first person at a public institution specifically hired to study the history and culture of Mormonism.

Jones said the program hopes to add further endowed or named chairs in religious studies and additional faculty covering areas like Islam, Judaism and Hinduism.

"The program has done remarkably well in its first full year with both endowed chairs in place," Prebish said. "Student demand is overwhelming, and we have attracted some of the best students in the university to our courses. The number of majors and minors is growing, and we look forward to continuing that growth."