



Dear Colleagues,

I have made the difficult decision to retire from the position of Executive Vice President & Provost at USU. After consultation with President Cockett, the effective date for my retirement will be June 30, 2022. President Cockett is now in the process of organizing next steps for her executive team and filling the Provost position.

Working with you in helping lead Utah State University over the past four years has been a privilege. We have accomplished a great deal in furthering this remarkable Land Grant University's mission of teaching/learning, research/discovery/creative activity, and extension/engagement and outreach.

Among the many accomplishments of which I am most proud include:

We have focused on support for faculty and academic department heads. New tools have been developed to help departmental faculty assess the complexity of their curricula, and to address student success rates in various gateway classes. This office re-instated and updated a new department head workshop series. Thanks especially to all of you who serve in department head roles, which I see as a key to the continued high-quality academic work here at USU. Similarly, the Tenure Academy and Teaching Documentation Workshop were updated. Faculty members told us that regular email communications from this office were appreciated. In response, we launched the Provost Office Newsletter, which has features from all of our priority areas.

This office worked with faculty members to develop a successful proposal for USU to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohort of the ASPIRE iChange network. This effort is focused on recruiting and retaining faculty from underrepresented groups, as well as helping faculty members use more inclusive pedagogical approaches. We have developed a data dashboard that reveals our current situation along with survey information about practices across campus. We are now in action planning stages and a pilot project has been launched in the College of Science focused on recruiting a cohort of scientists with backgrounds in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Realignment of some units was accomplished to meet faculty and student needs. The School of Graduate Studies joined the Provost' Office. Dynamic new leadership has been added and the school's processes have been streamlined, improved, and upgraded in an ongoing process. Further, we embarked on a comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning effort as part of the Post-COVID Taskforce effort on, "The Future of Graduate Education." The Center for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research was created based on input from a faculty taskforce. The Department of Computer Science moved to the College of Science with faculty support.

To honor the lifetime efforts of the faculty, this office revived the Cazier Lifetime Achievement award to honor a faculty member each year for their continued hard work in all aspects of their role statement further in their career and well past the ultimate promotion to Professor. We are currently working with USU Advancement to re-invigorate the Leone Leadership Award, which is designed to recognize an outstanding USU Administrator in the academic realm.

The office has worked to attract top leadership at the dean level for our colleges, which is an ongoing quest to be sure that we continue to have vision in all of our academic areas. During the last four years, the faculty from our statewide system have become ingrained in their departments and colleges. We are

truly now one academic university! This focus on state and community, and not one campus, is a key part of our mission. We sought and were awarded Carnegie Status as a Community Engaged University in early 2020, an important recognition of USU's collaboration with its communities.

We also engaged new leadership in the Provost's Office with the additions of Vice Provost Paul Barr (Civil & Environmental Engineering), Associate Vice Provost Harrison Kleiner (Communication Studies & Philosophy), Associate Vice Provost Renee Galliher (Psychology), and Vice Provost Richard Cutler (Mathematics & Statistics). They joined the team that includes Janet Anderson, Janis Boettinger, Rich Etchberger, and Andi McCabe in helping lead this office's efforts to support USU's academic mission.

USU has taken a fresh approach to offering the Connections class, our first-year student experience. This program has been enhanced to provide critical mentorship by faculty and student peers throughout the first year. Results have been impressive; fall to fall retention rates for the 2018, 2019, through the 2020 cohorts have risen from 76.8% to 80.02% versus dropping from 71% to 69% for those who did not take the Connections course.

A new assessment plan was developed in collaboration with our partners in AIS to track student progress on learning outcomes for our general education program. This was done at the behest of our NWCCU Accreditors, but will help as USU continuously strives to improve general education outcomes. In addition to assessment, we have worked with the English Department and others to streamline bottleneck classes and refine our learning outcomes for our C1 and C2 courses. These courses are now shepherded in part by a general education sub-subcommittee. With the leadership of the English Department, the USU Writing Center has been re-envisioned with future improvements planned.

To further focus on student success, this office partnered with AIS to establish the "Student Success Collaborative" under the leadership of Janet Anderson. This dedicated group has led numerous successes in supporting the academic success of our students across the system through intentional advising, career design, and a focus on student retention.

There are many other accomplishments that could be mentioned, but suffice it to say that Global Engagement, the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, AAA (Analysis, Assessment, and Accreditation), and the USU Honors Program are all thriving. Thanks especially to the leadership of all those units including Janis Boettinger, Katie Lee-Koven, Michael Torrens, and Kristine Miller. Also, kudos to Melanie Ivans and the rest of the staff in this office who serve all of us so well.

More recently, I have had the honor of working with President Cockett, Dean White, Associate Dean Vanderwall, and Trustee John Ferry, along with many others, in bringing a full, four-year professional Doctor of Veterinary Medicine School to Utah State University. This remarkable accomplishment will enhance research and service to the State of Utah in producing needed Doctors of Veterinary Medicine in the state.

Lastly, hats off to all of you for your grit and perseverance during the COVID Pandemic. It has been such an honor to work with many of you as USU pivoted and responded with integrity, ingenuity, and optimism as we all weathered the storm. It is no surprise that USU was listed by one publication as an institution that was, "likely to thrive, not just survive."

Needless to say, it has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to work alongside President Cockett in achieving the many successes across USU under her leadership along with her entire executive team.

Donna and I wish you all the best of luck as you steer Utah State University to increasing successes as a respected and envied land-grant university in the West.

Sincerely,

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