SUMMER 2025

University of Utah Magazine

Start-up and Running
With help from the Master of Business Creation program, a U alum is redefining health care access in rural Ghana. p. 22

Ripple Effect
University research isn't just about degrees—it fuels economic prosperity and real-world solutions. p. 34

Still Climbing
Meet the Olympic medalist who's pursuing new heights as a U student while training to smash more world records. p. 15

A Living Museum

Step beneath the canopy of the U campus and Red Butte Garden & Arboretum to discover our marvelous treasury of trees. p. 28

Your Therapist Wants You to Go Outside

Whether you're crunching leaves on a shaded path, stretching out on the grass at Memory Grove, or pausing to watch fresh snow settle on the Wasatch peaks, just 10 minutes in nature can ease anxiety and boost mood, according to new University of Utah research.

"We know nature plays an important role in mental health, but behavioral health providers often overlook it as a clinical intervention," says Joanna Bettmann Schaefer MSW'99, lead author and professor at the U's College of Social Work.

After analyzing 30 years of data, researchers found that time outdoors supports mental well-being, with all kinds of activities and settings showing positive effects. Whether it was a brief visit to a city park or a multiday wilderness trip, all types of nature exposure demonstrated beneficial changes in adult mental health. Even the simplest moments—like a walk by a stream or a quiet rest under a tree—can offer a meaningful reset.

Photographer Howie Garber MD'80 captured this dramatic scene at Kanarra Falls in southern Utah.

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What started as a U alum's mission after tragedy is now reshaping how parts of rural Africa receive—and pay for—lifesaving medical care. p. 22

FEATURES

22 **Start-up and Running** Meet Osei Boateng, whose journey from a Ghanaian village to the U's Master of Business Creation program is revolutionizing health care access across rural Africa. With mobile clinics and blockchain payment solutions, he's proving a master's degree can be more than education—it can save lives.

28 **A Tree Grows on Campus** If you've walked the U, you've strolled through the living museum that is Utah's official state arboretum. Together, the trees on campus and at Red Butte Garden & Arboretum form an impressive canopy. Explore some of the awe-inspiring species in this magnificent collection.

34 **Research's Ripple Effect** Utah's most powerful economic driver might surprise you. University research is quietly fueling job creation, launching companies, and developing critical technologies that transform industries, from titanium manufacturing to cancer detection. Discover how innovation keeps the Beehive State humming—and why continued investment is crucial for America's future leadership in evolving technologies.

ON THE COVER

Illustrator Irene Laschi depicts tree species on the U campus. Top row, L to R: Blue Atlas cedar, bur-Gambel oak, ginkgo. Bottom, L to R: Tulip tree, Southern magnolia (above), Osage orange (below), sequoia.

WEB EXTRAS

More available at magazine.utah.edu

From a civil rights champion who marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. to a devoted couple who have spent their lives giving back to the university where their love story began, this year's Founders Day Award recipients embody extraordinary service and generosity. Discover their inspiring journeys at *magazine.utah.edu/founders2025*.

Lights, camera, runway! The U's annual student fashion show, organized by the Fashion in Business club, is a must-attend event where student designs take center stage. Glimpse the glamour on p. 16, then check out more photos at *magazine.utah.edu/fashion*.

Step onto campus for an interactive tour through Utah's state arboretum. Your smartphone unlocks fascinating facts when you scan the QR codes on nearly 100 trees on and around Presidents Circle. Check out what a mature specimen might look like in your own yard or simply marvel at the beauty of this diverse collection. Explore more by visiting *magazine.utah.edu/trees*.

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

The Power of Research

Discovery is in Utah's DNA. We're problem-solvers and trailblazers by nature—a spirit that has defined our state's approach to innovation for generations. At the U, this innovative mindset drives our research mission. With research funding under increased scrutiny, I want to emphasize that the University of Utah remains committed to this mission. Research universities like the U play a crucial role in society, turning bold ideas into breakthroughs that improve lives and fuel economies.

In 1969, for example, a small team in the John and Marcia Price College of Engineering helped lay the foundation for the Internet by establishing the U as the fourth node on the ARPANET. That same department produced innovators including Ed Catmull BS'69 PhD'74, Alan Ashton BA'66 PhD'70, and John Warnock BS'61 MS'64 PhD'69, who went on to develop game-changing technologies and found billion-dollar companies Pixar, WordPerfect, and Adobe, respectively.

Driven by $700 million in research funding in FY2024 and 8,300 employees, the U's research enterprise is a powerful economic engine. Every dollar spent on education generates more than $2 in economic activity, outpacing industries like air transportation and real estate. The U excels at turning discoveries into real-world impact, ranking among the top 10 public universities nationally for patents and innovation revenue. With 330+ companies born from U technologies, we've helped Utah earn the Innovation Intelligence Index's No. 1 ranking among states for innovation capacity nationwide.

Innovation continues to thrive across our campus. At the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine, our scientists are unlocking the mysteries of inherited disease by discovering genes behind types of blindness, cancer, and heart disease. Nobel Prize winner Mario Capecchi's gene targeting techniques opened new doors for treating previously incurable conditions and helped cement Utah as a life sciences hub. This issue explores research's remarkable ripple effects throughout Utah and beyond (p. 34).

The impact of university research is all around us—in the technologies we rely on, treatments that heal, and companies that harness our graduates' skills. With our groundbreaking discoveries and innovative solutions, the U is moving the world forward and turning big ideas into lasting impact.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR RANDALL HBA'90

We Heard You

Five years ago, *University of Utah Magazine* underwent a transformation—new look, fresh content, and a goal to better connect you with the U. We checked in on how we're doing to guide the next five years. Reader feedback shows more than half read every issue cover to cover, and 84 percent feel the magazine strengthens their connection to the U. Here's some of your other feedback.

We asked readers to share how the magazine resonates, and you responded enthusiastically:

"I started receiving the magazine about five or so years ago. I was blown away to see how far my little university in Utah has come. The magazine is so well done, but I think what it does best is casually showcasing amazing research and accomplishments in a way that's approachable and surprising. I got my master's at Stanford and also receive their magazine, and *Utah Magazine* is every bit as good or better."

"The writing is surprisingly engaging. Feels more like a magazine than a press release. Keep up the good work!"

"I didn't attend the U myself, but over the years I've come to feel like part of the family. I give because I believe in education and in the power of opportunity—and every time I read the alumni magazine, I'm reminded why it matters. It's not just a university—it's a community making an impact, and I'm proud to support it."

"I have 13 grandkids (and one more on the way!), and while not all of them are old enough to read the alumni magazine yet, I love sharing little stories from it with the ones who are. I'm always hoping as many of them as possible will choose the U someday."

"I graduated from the business school years ago, and now I've got three kids of my own. Two of them are really into the arts... As a parent, it's encouraging to see the U supporting those paths and showing that success doesn't have to follow just one formula."

"I'm so impressed with how far the University of Utah has come. I feel like this latest evolution of the magazine from *Continuum* shows how the U is stepping onto the national scene. We also get a magazine from Michigan State, and the U's is so much better."

SOCIAL SPOTLIGHT

Part-time Utah resident, actor, and U fan Ty Burrell (aka *Modern Family*'s Phil Dunphy) got photographed flashing the U at a recent Utah Jazz game. Thanks for bringing that classic Dunphy enthusiasm, Ty!

"I graduated more decades ago than I care to admit, but I still feel a strong connection to the U. The alumni magazine is something I always look forward to—it brings back memories while also showing just how far the university has come... It makes me proud to be part of that long history, and even prouder to see the U continuing to grow and evolve."

We want to hear from you!

Join the discussion at *magazine.utah.edu* or email us at *magazine@utah.edu*. Comments may be edited for length and clarity.

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News from the u

Left to right: Hope Eccles, Lisa Eccles, Spencer Fox Eccles, President Taylor Randall, Katie Eccles, and Spencer P. Eccles

New West Valley Health Facility

A new westside hospital and health campus is slated to open in 2028, thanks to a $75 million Eccles Foundation gift

A new state-of-the-art hospital and medical campus will bring much-needed health care access to the Salt Lake valley's westside communities. The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation has committed $75 million toward the project, which will be the first off-campus inpatient hospital spearheaded by the U in its 175-year history—and its largest multi-specialty health clinic.

This expansion addresses a critical gap in health care access—while more than 725,000 residents live west of I-15, only one in 10 hospital beds currently serve the area. "This groundbreaking investment continues the Eccles family's extraordinary legacy of expanding health care access and education across Utah," says U President Taylor Randall HBA'90.

The Eccles family's support of University of Utah Health spans generations. In 1965, Spencer S. Eccles helped establish the U's medical library, and George S. Eccles chaired the first fundraising campaign to build University Hospital in 1975. In 2021, the family made a monumental gift of $110 million to the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine (named for alum Spencer F. Eccles BS'56).

The $855 million campus in West Valley City will feature approximately 100 hospital beds and comprehensive outpatient clinics with 200 exam rooms for specialties including heart care, orthopedics, women's health, and pediatrics, in addition to general internal medicine and urgent care. Expected to serve over 341,000 outpatient visits annually, the facility will create more than 2,000 new jobs and provide education and career advancement opportunities in medical fields.

As Utah's second-largest city, West Valley is home to a culturally rich and diverse population with strong neighborhoods and a growing business community. Despite these strengths, residents face significant barriers to accessing health care. They experience a life expectancy nearly 10 years lower than in eastside communities, nearly twice the rate of heart disease-related deaths, a 44 percent higher rate of diabetes, and a 38 percent greater prevalence of stroke.

"Currently, westside residents drive more than 12 million miles per year to access U of U Health services," says Bob Carter, CEO of U of U Health. "This new campus will bring comprehensive, top-tier health care closer to home."

Construction will begin this summer on the 22-acre site at 3750 South and 5600 West. The multi-specialty health clinic is scheduled to open in 2028, followed by hospital rooms in 2029. Community members have been actively involved in the planning process, with hundreds attending numerous stakeholder meetings since the project was announced.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Against a national trend of declining college enrollment, the U continues to break records with five consecutive years of growth. The university recently launched the "Mountains We Climb" campaign (*mountains.utah.edu*) to showcase its story to a national audience, generating over 10 million new impressions and digital engagement rates triple the industry average in just its first four months.

The Kem and Carolyn Gardner Mental Health Crisis Care Center has opened in South Salt Lake, marking a major step in expanding mental health services in Utah. As the first building on the future Huntsman Mental Health Institute Campus of Hope, the 78,000-square-foot facility offers crisis care, outpatient treatment, and community support services including legal services and a dental clinic. Funded by private donations, the University of Utah, state, and county contributions, the center aims to provide comprehensive, accessible care for adults in need.

After more than 50 years, a prominent part of the University of Utah's eastern skyline is changing. The Medical Plaza, a 123,600-square-foot housing complex built in 1971, is being demolished after closing in 2023 due to maintenance issues. While the site's long-term future is still being determined, university leadership is carefully considering its redevelopment. The demolition is set for completion this summer.

Building College Town Magic

A vision for transforming the University of Utah's campus over the next decade is coming into focus. This spring, the university's Board of Trustees approved a new Campus Physical Development Framework, a strategic guide that supports President Taylor Randall's goal of enhancing campus life and community engagement. Key elements of this vision include continuing to shift from a commuter-focused campus to a more residential experience and centralizing student life in a concentrated area.

"This is the highlight of this new plan and the largest change—a focus on building a college town not only for students, but also for faculty and staff, where we can engage together and build community in a very different way," says Randall HBA'90.

To help shape the framework, the university engaged thousands of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members through workshops, surveys, and public forums. Their input was invaluable in ensuring that the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the university community.

Aligned with the university's Impact 2030 strategic plan, the framework reflects goals to expand student enrollment, increase research funding, enhance the student and patient experience, and prepare for the 2034 Winter Olympics while positioning the U as a top 10 public institution with unsurpassed societal impact.

Future planning focuses on six key districts: academic and research, health, college town magic, cultural, athletics, and Research Park. These areas will guide growth, ensuring each serves a clear purpose while remaining adaptable to evolving needs.

One of the most significant elements under study is the relocation of the Jon M. Huntsman Center. For more than 55 years, this venue has hosted major university events, but as it ages, the university is exploring opportunities for a modern facility that better serves athletes, fans, and the broader community. Events would continue at the Huntsman Center until a new venue is constructed.

A formal study is underway to assess potential locations, and input from students, alumni, faculty, and community members is essential. To stay informed about engagement opportunities and updates on the Campus Physical Development Framework, visit *campus.utah.edu*.

This conceptual rendering is for illustrative purposes only.

From Toxic to Tonic

Could a toxin from one of the planet's most venomous animals improve treatments for diabetes and hormone disorders? Quite possibly, according to a University of Utah-led international research team. The team identified a substance in the venom of a predatory marine cone snail that mimics somatostatin—a human hormone that regulates blood sugar and hormone levels. The very traits that make it lethal in the ocean could help scientists engineer safer, more effective therapies for serious conditions.

"Venomous animals have, through evolution, fine-tuned venom components to hit a particular target in the prey and disrupt it," says Helena Safavi, associate professor of biochemistry and senior author on the study. Studying how the component affects normal pathways provides "a bit of a shortcut" for medicinal chemists, she notes.

Somatostatin acts as a biological brake pedal, regulating blood sugar and hormone levels. The cone snail toxin consomatin mimics this effect—but with a crucial difference. Researchers found that unlike somatostatin, which interacts with multiple proteins, consomatin homes in on a single target.

In fact, the cone snail toxin is more precisely targeted than the most specific synthetic drugs designed to regulate hormone levels. Consomatin's effects on blood sugar could make direct therapeutic use risky for people with diabetes, but by studying its structure, researchers could design drugs for endocrine disorders that have fewer side effects. Plus, consomatin contains an unusual amino acid that prevents it from breaking down quickly, offering potential for long-lasting treatments.

For over 50 years, the U has been a hot spot for research into snail venom's pharmacological properties. The legacy began when renowned cone snail scientist Baldomero Olivera arrived in Utah in 1970 from his native Philippines. Olivera and other faculty from the U's School of Biological Sciences, including Samuel Espino, contributed to the recent study, which was conducted in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen.

Tiny but Mighty

A 500-million-year-old fossil from Utah reveals key secrets about vertebrate evolution

In Utah's dinosaur-rich landscape, a minuscule fossil without bones or teeth might seem unimpressive. But this 500-million-year-old specimen is providing crucial clues about how animals like us developed backbones.

The newly discovered species, *Nuucichthys rhynchocephalus* (named after the Ute word for themselves, Núu-ci), lived during the Cambrian Period when animal life was exploding with diversity. Despite its age, it shows surprisingly sophisticated features that mark it as one of our earliest known vertebrate ancestors.

"It is what we call a 'stem group' species, which means that it already possessed some characteristics of modern vertebrates, but not all," explains Rudy Lerosey-Aubril, the Harvard paleontologist who led the research.

The creature had large, complex eyes and specialized breathing structures, but notably lacked fins. This absence, clearly visible in the well-preserved fossil, suggests these early vertebrates weren't strong swimmers but instead lived near the ocean's surface, likely feeding on plankton.

The discovery makes Utah one of only a handful of places worldwide where such ancient vertebrate fossils have been found.

"Utah is home to an incredible paleontological archive," remarks Lerosey-Aubril. "The Beehive State is renowned for its spectacular dinosaurs, but fewer people know that it is also one of the world's most important regions for studying the origins of animal life."

The fossil is now part of the Natural History Museum of Utah's collection, where ongoing research continues to illuminate the dawn of animal life on Earth.

Reconstruction by Franz Anthony | © Harvard University

PICTURE

Meet Ally, a 30-foot *Allosaurus fragilis* skeleton greeting visitors in the B-gates concourse at Salt Lake City International Airport. The Natural History Museum of Utah installed the 150-million-year-old state fossil specimen to celebrate Utah's prehistoric heritage and mark 100 years since U scientists first discovered these bones.

Summer Ozone Tied to Risks for Unborn Children

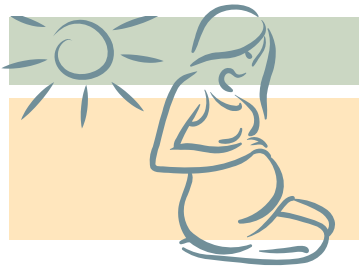
Ozone pollution during pregnancy significantly increases the risk of intellectual disability in children, according to a new U study. The research, published in the *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology*, found that exposure during the second trimester—when fetal brains produce 250,000 neurons per minute—was most critical.

Ground-level ozone, a highly reactive oxygen molecule, is a growing summertime pollution hazard in Utah, particularly as the climate warms. It forms when emissions from vehicles, industry, and other sources interact with sunlight, creating harmful air quality conditions. Long linked to respiratory issues, ozone is now also being examined for its impact on brain development. The federal standard for ozone is 70 parts per billion, a limit often exceeded on the Wasatch Front during summer.

"The body of evidence suggests that it is important that we never take our foot off the gas in terms of working to reduce the levels of air pollution that Utahns are breathing," says sociology professor Sara Grineski, who led the research.

The findings are especially relevant for Utah, where summer ozone levels frequently spike. A 10-parts-per-billion increase in average second-trimester exposure was linked to a 55.3 percent higher chance of intellectual disability compared to siblings and a 22.8 percent increase compared to population controls.

The research team, which included experts from sociology, psychiatry, and environmental science, analyzed birth data from 2003-14 using the U's Utah Population Database. They tracked where mothers lived and linked ozone exposure to each trimester, offering new insight into the risks posed by air pollution.



Blood Testing Goes Orbital

U science blasts off to decode zero gravity's effects on humans

A tiny bubble of metal floating in the void, the International Space Station is an engineering marvel designed to keep humans alive in profoundly inhospitable conditions. But life in space, with zero gravity and higher exposure to cosmic radiation, poses serious health risks—including dangerous blood clots.

Now, a U research team is taking their work to the final frontier. Matthew Rondina BS'98 MD'03 MS'12, professor of internal medicine and pathology at U of U Health, and Hansjorg Schwertz MOH'19, physician at Billings Clinic and adjunct assistant professor at the U, launched blood cells to the ISS last November to study how spaceflight affects clotting.

"As the duration of time that astronauts spend in space increases, we believe the risk of blood clots likely continues to accumulate," says Rondina. In the isolated environment of a space station, clots are especially dangerous. "You don't want to have astronauts developing any occlusive thrombi [blood clots] up in space," adds Schwertz. "It requires a lot of logistics and treatment."

The team is examining platelets—cells involved in blood clotting—and megakaryocytes, bone marrow cells that produce platelets. While in orbit, NASA astronauts will conduct experiments to show how space exposure changes these cells' gene activity, proteins, and functionality.

An artist's depiction of the International Space Station in orbit. Elements of this image furnished by NASA.

The research could improve health care both in space and on Earth. "This may allow us to identify new genes and pathways that regulate platelet production and clotting," explains Rondina. "We think a lot of those pathways likely have relevance to diseases that occur in normal gravity conditions." The findings could also provide insights into immune disorders, since platelets play a key role in immune system regulation.

When Hunting Coyotes Backfires

Conventional wisdom suggests that hunting reduces wildlife populations. But for coyotes, the opposite appears true—areas that allow hunting actually have more of these crafty canines, according to new findings by U wildlife biologist Austin Green HBS'16 PhD'22 and researchers from the University of New Hampshire, North Carolina State University, and the University of Illinois.

Using nearly 4,600 motion-triggered cameras across the U.S., including arrays Green maintains in the Wasatch Mountains and along the Jordan River, the team found coyote numbers were 97 percent higher in hunting zones. These protective animals have a unique response to population pressure.

"They're such territorial animals that if you remove the most territorial one," Green explains, "two or three take their place, start breeding, and you lead to actual increases in coyote population."

This resilience stands in stark contrast to other predators like wolves and cougars. Even in Utah, where hunters can collect a $50 bounty for coyote ears, these adaptable animals continue to thrive—suggesting traditional control methods may need rethinking.

The Grandparents Are In

The University of Utah Professors Emeriti Club proves that retirement can be the start of a new kind of impact. More than 1,000 strong, the group contributes an average of $4.4 million annually to the U and established the Professors Emeriti Completion Scholarship fund, helping undergraduates within 12 credits of graduation overcome financial and personal hurdles. Many emeriti also remain active in research, publishing, and mentoring graduate students.

But their impact isn't limited to scholarship. Each week, emeritus volunteers set up in the Union and residence halls for two-hour sessions, where students drop in to talk about everything from coursework to life decisions. "So often, students just need someone to say, 'You can do this,' " says Ken Jameson, who served as president of the Emeriti Club in 2022-23. "Whether they're questioning their major or navigating personal challenges, we try to help them see possibilities they may not have considered."

Committed to lifelong learning and mentorship, these retired faculty members continue to shape the university community beyond the classroom. Here's a sampling of the advice they pass along.

No one loves you more than your parents, and their intentions run deep. But living authentically means following your own instincts and talents, not theirs. When you pursue your path with wisdom and purpose, they often come to understand your choices.

L. JACKSON NEWELL
Professor Emeritus of Educational Leadership and Former Dean of Liberal Education (Undergraduate Studies)

When you're feeling isolated, don't retreat into screens. Find activities you love, get involved, and build genuine connections through shared interests.

KEN JAMESON
Professor Emeritus of Economics

Don't chase someone else's dream. When you build a life around what genuinely fascinates you, even the difficult days feel worthwhile.

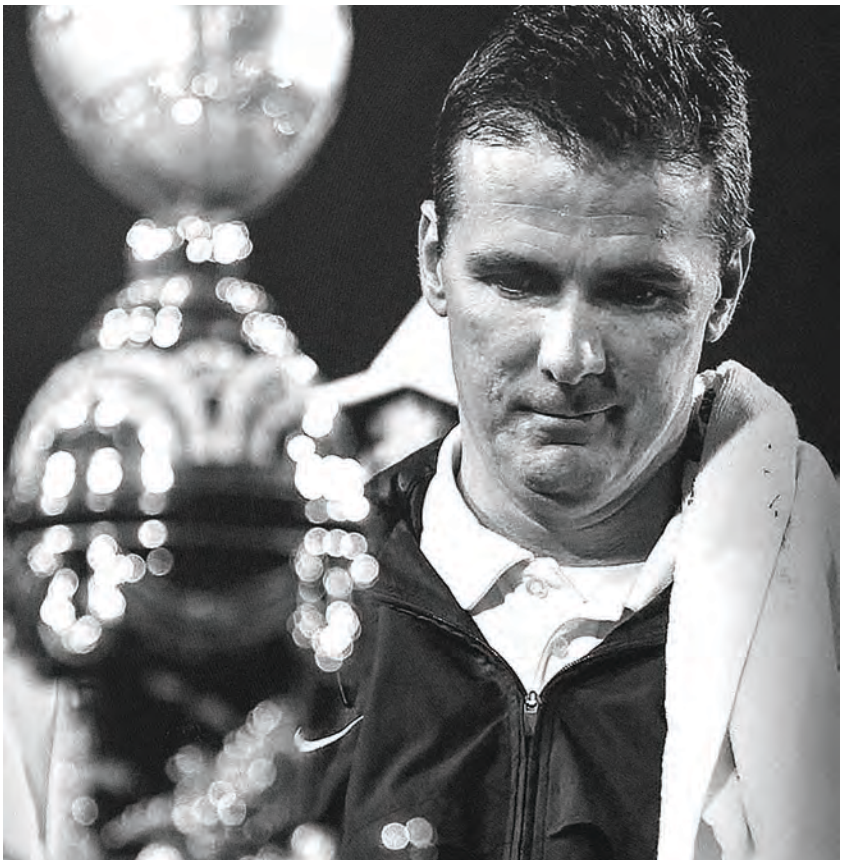
MICHAEL K. MAGILL
Professor Emeritus and Former Chair, Department of Family and Preventive Medicine

COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN BE SO SELF-CRITICAL. GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK. BE AS KIND TO YOURSELF AS YOU ARE TO YOUR FRIENDS. AND SAY YES TO NEW EXPERIENCES—THIS IS YOUR TIME TO EXPLORE.

RACHEL BENATOR
Former Clinical Faculty, Department of Ophthalmology (Residency '90)

Your values tend to crystalize during college as your knowledge and self-awareness grow. Figure out how to be true to yourself each day.

GLADE ELLINGSON PHD'90
Emeritus Staff Psychologist and Clinical Professor



Meyer Makes History Again

The coach who led Utah to its first BCS bowl victory will be enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame

Urban Meyer's brief but transformative tenure at the U is helping earn him college football's highest honor. The former Utah head coach, who guided the Utes to an undefeated season and historic Fiesta Bowl victory in 2004, has been selected for the 2025 College Football Hall of Fame class.

Meyer arrived in Salt Lake City as a relatively unknown 38-year-old coach in 2002. But in just two seasons, he transformed Utah football into a national powerhouse, compiling a remarkable 22-2 record and becoming the first non-power conference team to crash the Bowl Championship Series (BCS).

His 2004 squad was particularly special. The Utes dominated their schedule, including wins over Texas A&M, Arizona, and BYU, before capping their perfect season with a commanding 35-7 victory over Pittsburgh in the Fiesta Bowl. That team, which featured future No. 1 NFL draft pick Alex Smith BS'04 at quarterback, finished with a ranking of No. 4 in the nation.

"This is the best group of young men I've ever been around," Meyer said after the Fiesta Bowl. "It's going to be hard to say goodbye, but we're saying goodbye 12-0."

Meyer went on to win three national championships—two at Florida and one at Ohio State—and finished his college coaching career with a .854 winning percentage, third-best all-time. He joins former Utah coach Ike Armstrong (inducted 1957) and Smith (class of 2024) as the only Utes in the College Football Hall of Fame.

The induction ceremony will be held later this year on Dec. 9 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas.

SPORTS BRIEFS

In its 49th straight appearance at Nationals, Utah Gymnastics placed fourth in the NCAA Championship this spring, closing out their 50th season of competition with a score of 197.2375. This was the Red Rocks' fifth consecutive year appearing in the Final Four, making it the only team in NCAA women's gymnastics to do so.

The U ski team won their 17th national title all-time—and fourth in the last five years—at the 2025 NCAA Championships in March. The Utes came from behind for a commanding finish in the final days of the competition, with three student-athletes winning individual titles: Erica Lavén in the women's 7.5K classic, Johs Braathen in men's giant slalom, and Joe Davies in the men's 20K freestyle. Seventeen All-American citations went to Utah athletes, the most of any team at the meet.

Utah Swim and Dive's Elias Petersen was named Big 12 Men's Diver of the Year. The Sweden native is the first Ute to garner a Big 12 yearly award and the only diver in the conference to earn First Team All-American status on the national stage. Head coach Richard Marschner was named Big 12 Men's Dive Coach of the Year after he led his team to the top of the conference charts. His divers earned the most All-Big 12 honors of any team in the conference.

Alex Jensen BS'05 has been named head coach of the Utah men's basketball program. The Utah Athletics Hall of Famer was a starter on the Runnin' Utes 1998 Final Four team under coach Rick Majerus. Previously, Jensen was assistant coach for the Dallas Mavericks and spent 10 years on the Utah Jazz coaching staff.

The U Lacrosse team led the Atlantic Sun Conference in post-season awards. Junior Nikko DiPonio was named Defensive Player of the Year, 13 players earned all-conference honors, and four players made the All-Freshman team.

Still Climbing

In the same time it takes you to read this sentence, Sam Watson won an Olympic medal. The speed climber scaled 15 meters (50 feet) in 4.74 seconds at the 2024 Summer Games, breaking his own world record and taking home the bronze. A minor slip in the semifinals cost him a shot at gold, but he left Paris with the best time of any medalist.

A newer Olympic event, the 15m speed climb is the Games' shortest competition. Its fastest contender will let you in on a secret—accuracy, not speed, is key.

"It's more like shooting or archery, rather than swimming or track, because of the high level of precision," explains Watson. "I'm moving my limbs slower than a sprinter because I have to place them in very specific spots."

In spring of 2024, Watson moved to Salt Lake to train at USA Climbing's headquarters and enrolled at the U. Soon to be a second-year student, he's balancing competitive climbing with pursuing a business degree.

A Texas native, Watson began climbing almost as soon as he could walk, scaling furniture until his parents brought him to a climbing gym on his fifth birthday. He joined a team and began competing nationally, then internationally. His drive to improve led him to the top, and by Paris he'd won three climbing World Cups and a Pan American Games. His goal is to claim the record for the most World Cup titles in men's speed climbing—the current record is 11—and to appear in more Olympic Games.

"Connecting with athlete peers from around the world—there's nothing like it," says Watson, who calls his Olympics experience life-changing. "I'll hopefully be in that sphere for the rest of my competitive career. There are no guarantees, but I'm ready to work and keep progressing."

Photo by Lena Drapella, courtesy USA Climbing

Fashion Passion

The bass is thumping, the cameras are flashing, and models are strutting the catwalk in everything from streetwear to wedding couture. This isn't Paris or Milan—it's the Union Ballroom, transformed for one glamorous night into a fashion show organized and run entirely by U students, with student models exhibiting student designs.

The show has become a must-see campus event since its launch by the Fashion in Business (FIB) club three years ago. Housed in the David Eccles School of Business but open to all U students, FIB helps style aficionados explore fashion careers and network with professionals. The U may not offer a fashion degree, but that doesn't prevent grads from finding a path into the industry, notes FIB president Caitlin Draper.

"We have students interested in design, entrepreneurship, fashion journalism, and other areas," says the senior, who is herself interested in the social justice and environmental aspect of the industry.

Draper hopes the event shows students fashion's multidisciplinary possibilities and provides a supportive environment for designers. "It can be scary to put yourself out there," she notes. "I hope they gain confidence in what they have to share."

1 *The dressing room buzzes as models prepare to hit the runway. Photo by Harriet Richardson.*

2 *Designers Shayla Le and Lucy Rodriguez make final tweaks. Photo by Harriet Richardson.*

3 *Models in Maison de Bassaid (by Maryam Bassaid) wait backstage. Photo by Minh Vuong.*

4 *A Shayla and Lucy model preps in the dressing room. Photo by Harriet Richardson.*

5 *Models show off Matta Perla gowns (by Madolyn Talley). Photo by Minh Vuong.*

6 *A Shayla and Lucy look takes the spotlight. Photo by Eduardo Ramirez Velazquez.*

7 *An oversize bow graces a Matta Perla gown. Photo by Eduardo Ramirez Velazquez.*

8 *Canyon Construct streetwear (by Canyon Sargent) hits the runway. Photo by Harriet Richardson.*

9 *Cape-like sleeves elevate a Maison de Bassaid look. Photo by Eduardo Ramirez Velazquez.*

7

8

9

AI Flags Hidden Pregnancy Risks

A U study uncovers unexpected risk factors that could transform how doctors monitor pregnancies

In pregnancies where the mother has pre-existing diabetes, female fetuses face higher risks than males—the opposite of what doctors typically expect, according to a new U study that analyzed nearly 10,000 pregnancies using artificial intelligence.

The finding is just one example of how AI could revolutionize prenatal care, says Nathan Blue MS'22, an obstetrician-gynecologist and assistant professor in the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine. The study, published in *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, found dramatic variations in risk levels among pregnancies that are currently treated identically under clinical guidelines.

Take fetuses in the bottom 10 percent for weight. Current guidelines recommend intensive monitoring for all such pregnancies. But the AI analysis revealed that risk levels in this group varied dramatically—from no riskier than average to nearly 10 times the average risk—based on combinations of factors like fetal sex, pre-existing diabetes, and presence of anomalies like heart defects.

"AI models can essentially estimate a risk that is specific to a given person's context," Blue explains, "and they can do it transparently and reproducibly, which is what our brains can't do."

The researchers used "explainable AI," which shows exactly which factors contributed to each assessment. Unlike "closed box" AI systems, this transparency allows doctors to understand the model's reasoning. While it still needs real-world testing, Blue believes AI-guided risk assessment could transform prenatal care by helping doctors make more personalized treatment decisions.

The research was supported by the U's One-U Responsible Artificial Intelligence Initiative, a $100 million program launched in 2023 to harness AI for societal benefit.

Leif Sorensen BS'24

"When I first came to the U, I did all the things I thought would make me happy. I enrolled in classes, joined a fraternity, and made new friends. But I still felt something was missing. After serving in Mongolia as an English-teaching missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I found a new purpose. I realized that we all have the ability to improve others' lives. I wanted to do my part while continuing my university education.

Because many Mongolians live nomadic lives, it's often difficult for them to access health care. Specialists and urgent care are especially hard to find in the countryside. In 2020, I met Dr. Raymond Price [BS'83], co-founder of the Center for Global Surgery at the U (which provides me with a scholarship as well as a seed grant for my breast cancer research). Dr. Price was addressing these challenges in Mongolia, and he inspired me to use my skills to help as many people as possible.

For several years, despite a 14-hour time difference, I served as an interpreter and researcher in Zoom meetings with a multidisciplinary board of Mongolian and American breast cancer specialists. In 2022, I traveled back to Mongolia with Dr. Price to help interpret a course that teaches physicians lifesaving measures. During these trips, I built connections with physicians from the National Cancer Center of Mongolia and the Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences. Together we traveled across the country to support physician training to expand health care access.

My undergraduate experience was certainly unconventional—attending university classes online at 1 a.m., taking finals in the South Korea airport, and organizing a breast cancer screening project in the Gobi Desert. My time at the U taught me that you can still pursue an education while making a difference. You don't have to wait—you already have the skills to make the world a better place."

Heart Reset

A breakthrough gene therapy at the U shows promise for millions with heart failure

A new gene therapy can reverse the effects of heart failure and restore heart function in a large animal model. The therapy increases the amount of blood the heart can pump and dramatically improves survival, in what researchers are calling "an unprecedented recovery of cardiac function."

Currently, heart failure is irreversible without a transplant. But if this therapy shows similar results in future clinical trials, it could help heal the hearts of the one in four people who will eventually develop heart failure.

The treatment focuses on restoring a critical heart protein called cardiac bridging integrator 1 (cBIN1). "When cBIN1 is down, we know patients are not going to do well," says Robin Shaw, director of the U's Nora Eccles Harrison Cardiovascular Research and Training Institute (CVRTI) and co-senior author on the study. "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to say, 'What happens when we give it back?' "

The results were striking. Previous heart failure therapies have shown improvements of 5-10 percent. This therapy improved function by 30 percent. "It's night and day," Shaw adds.

"Even though the animals are still facing stress on the heart to induce heart failure, in animals that got the treatment, we saw recovery of heart function," says TingTing Hong, associate professor of pharmacology and toxicology and CVRTI investigator at the U.

The team plans to apply for FDA approval for human clinical trials in fall 2025. "This human disease, which affects more than six million Americans—maybe this is something we can cure," Hong says.

PICTURE

Emmy Award-winning ESPN commentator Holly Rowe BA'04, who has covered everything from the College Football National Championship to the Women's Final Four and made history as the Utah Jazz's first female color commentator, delivered the U's 2025 commencement address.

Could Coffee Lower the Risk of Head and Neck Cancers?

Your morning cup of joe may do more than just wake you up—it could help protect against certain cancers. A new analysis led by Huntsman Cancer Institute researchers found that drinking more than four cups of caffeinated coffee daily was associated with lower odds of developing head and neck cancers when compared to non-coffee drinkers.

The study, which pooled data from 14 international research groups examining over 25,000 participants, discovered that heavy coffee drinkers had 17 percent lower odds of head and neck cancer overall, with even stronger protection against specific types like oral cavity cancer (30 percent lower risk) and throat cancer (22 percent lower risk).

Even decaf lovers saw benefits, with decaffeinated coffee linked to 25 percent lower odds of oral cavity cancer. Tea showed mixed results—while light tea drinking (one cup or less daily) was associated with lower overall risk, drinking more than one cup was linked to higher odds of laryngeal cancer.

"Coffee and tea habits are fairly complex, and these findings support the need for more data and further studies around the impact that coffee and tea can have on reducing cancer risk," says Yuan-Chin Amy Lee, Huntsman Cancer Institute investigator and adjunct associate professor in the U's Department of Family and Preventive Medicine in the Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine.

The research comes at a critical time, as head and neck cancers—currently the seventh most common cancers worldwide—are on the rise in low- and middle-income countries.

BY THE NUMBERS

Utah's fintech industry is booming—creating jobs, boosting wages, and driving innovation. A new report from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute highlights just how big of a player fintech (financial technology such as banking apps) has become in the state's economy.

67
fintech companies in Utah

8,000
jobs created in fintech (plus 22,000 additional jobs in Utah's economy)

$1 billion
in annual wages (impacting $2.3 billion in wages across all industries)

$2.6 billion
in fintech industry output (generating $7.3 billion in total economic impact)

67% of fintech companies in Salt Lake County, 26% in Utah County

$131,500
average salary—double the Utah statewide average

Data as of 2023

First Year Free

The U's College of Pharmacy covers full first-year tuition for all incoming students

At the U's College of Pharmacy, the first year of your doctoral program comes with an unexpected perk—it's completely free. Thanks to a groundbreaking scholarship endowment created by The ALSAM Foundation, every incoming PharmD student gets their first year of tuition covered, no strings attached.

"Usually, nothing in life is free," says Kyle Turner PharmD'14, associate professor and assistant dean. "But in this case, it is."

The initiative, now in its third year, has already transformed the program. Applications are up, classes are full, and students who never thought pharmacy school was within reach are pursuing their dreams.

"The First Year Free program has made me see how much of a difference affordability can make in shaping a student's overall experience," notes Stockton Welch, a second-year PharmD student. "It shows the U's level of commitment to its students and has made a graduate education much more accessible."

For Brian Farley, another second-year student with a wife and two children, the program removed crucial financial barriers. "Having a full year free means I take on less debt and will be able to get out of debt that much faster," he remarks.

The impact has been immediate. Kamryn Shepherd MPA'23, the college's prepharmacy student advisor, has watched class sizes grow from half full to capacity with waiting lists. Some prospective students are so surprised by the offer that they don't believe it at first.

"We truthfully tell students that the first-year savings are not tacked on later," says Shepherd. "It's truly incredible."

The program is made possible by The ALSAM Foundation, established by L. S. and Aline W. Skaggs, along with contributions from other alumni and donors—all investing in the next generation of pharmacists.

PICTURE

The U's LUKE Arm shared the Super Bowl spotlight when Brad Pitt featured the breakthrough prosthetic—which translates thoughts into movement and provides a sense of touch—in his pregame video. We covered this remarkable technology in *Utah Magazine* in 2020. Watch the video and read the feature at *magazine.utah.edu/superbowl.*

HEALTH INSURANCE

(yeah, we do that too)

HEALTH PLANS
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

BY ELAINE JARVIK

ILLUSTRATION BY KATHERINE LAM

START-UP AND RUNNING

THE U'S MASTER OF BUSINESS CREATION PROGRAM GIVES ENTREPRENEURS MORE THAN A DEGREE— IT OFFERS A LAUNCHPAD TO RETHINK INDUSTRIES AND BUILD WHAT COMES NEXT.

P. 22

The night his grandmother died—after a 45-minute taxi ride to a clinic where it turned out there was no one to help her—Osei Boateng MBC'24 vowed to become a doctor when he grew up. He was 15 then, a grieving boy with a big heart, who lived in a Ghanaian village where people often died because they couldn't get adequate care.

Now, 15 years later, Boateng's heart is still big, but his plans have grown bolder—which led him, in 2023, to the U's Master of Business Creation (MBC) program, which is provided by the Department of Entrepreneurship & Strategy in partnership with the Lassonde Entrepreneur Institute at the David Eccles School of Business.

By then he had already created a nonprofit foundation that brought mobile health clinics to rural Ghanaian villages. Now he wanted to learn how to expand those services, as well as create a for-profit company that would change the way medicine is paid for in Ghana and beyond.

The meager shorthand for Boateng's goals might be "health care access," but that hardly captures what it looks like on the ground. Click, instead, on a video CNN made when it selected Boateng as a Top 10 global "Hero" two years ago and you'll see a van bumping along red clay roads, dodging potholes and mud. Inside the van are blood pressure cuffs, glucose monitors, portable labs, and vaccines. When the vehicle finally arrives at a tiny village, eager people line up to be measured, poked, and counseled. In the middle of it all is Boateng, with his lilting voice and ready smile.

OneHealth+, the second start-up that Boateng brought to the U's MBC program, is one that operates in the less tangible world of blockchains and digital. To understand its goal, imagine the kind of village where Boateng grew up, where a sick man might walk for hours to get to a hospital, or might choose not to go at all because he can't pay the bill.

For years, Ghanaians in poor rural areas like this have sometimes relied on remittances from relatives who have moved to more affluent countries—relatives who want to ensure the money is used for medical care but can't guarantee that it will be or that the exchange rate will result in sufficient funds.

Boateng's idea is a method of transferring "health credits," via a secure blockchain, from anywhere in the world. He is also working with small Ghanaian businesses that can't afford to provide costly medical insurance to their employees but could instead provide health credits for doctor's visits and hospital care.

Boateng, who emigrated with his family from Ghana to New Jersey after high school and then got a scholarship to Cornell University, had planned to go to medical school but decided that he could have a bigger impact by studying health care policy. He went on to earn a master's in health care administration at Cornell, started the OKB Hope Foundation, worked in hospital administration in Detroit, and eventually found his way to the MBC program in Utah.

Osei Boateng MBC'24 is building a start-up and nonprofit focused on technology and impact with a Master of Business Creation degree from the U.

Lots of brilliant ideas for new businesses are dreamed up every day in the shower. But what the Master of Business Creation program looks for, says MBC director and entrepreneurship professor Paul Brown BA'89, is a brilliant idea plus something that already sets it in motion—customer revenue, investment capital, a prototype, or the formation of a business entity.

There is no other program like the MBC in the world, says Brown; it's a master's program that is both a learning experience and a start-up accelerator, providing practical skills a founder can immediately use to run an actual company. The program, first imagined by U of U vice president for innovation Troy D'Ambrosio BA'82, provides one-on-one mentoring from local and national business experts, and a due diligence framework that requires student founders to meet several stringent operational benchmarks for their business before they graduate. Forty-five percent of the founders are women, atypical for the start-up world, says Brown.

The MBC program has won several awards for its innovative curriculum and has grown rapidly. In addition to the David Eccles School of Business underwriting many of the costs, gold mining and investment legend Pierre Lassonde MBA'73—who founded the university's Lassonde Entrepreneur Institute in 2001—and the Lassonde Family Foundation provided substantial financial support to keep the program affordable, says Brown.

Three years ago, the program introduced an online track for founders across the U.S., and in 2024 it added MBC Global, led by marketing professor Jeff Davis BA'86 BS'86. It currently operates in four African countries, with plans to expand later into Asia and Europe.

A balance between gumption and a willingness to learn is what makes an MBC entrepreneur successful, says Brown. "You need grit to get over the fact that people are going to constantly tell you your idea won't work, it's never been done before, we're not going to give you money. But you can't be so single-minded in your devotion to that dream that you're not coachable."

What began with a single mobile clinic is now a growing health network bringing care to thousands in Ghana's most underserved regions.

Since launching in 2019, the MBC program has graduated over 200 start-up founders, with products and services ranging from collectible knives to virtual migraine care to Rena Vanzo's audaciously named Boob Bus, which brings mammograms and genetic testing to women in Utah.

Vanzo MBA'22 MBC'24, a genetic counselor, knew that Utah ranked in the bottom five states in the U.S. for mammogram compliance. Like Boateng, she envisioned a clinic on wheels that could reach people who lacked the time or inclination to visit a medical center. Her Boob Bus, where she serves as director, genetic counselor, and bus driver, also provides a questionnaire to estimate a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer.

The MBC program, she says, gave her not only practical tools—about insurance, marketing, regulatory compliance, and the competitive landscape—but also emotional support from colleagues, and one-on-one guidance from her mentor, Dan Kossmann, a Boston-based former CFO at several tech and health care companies. Kossmann has mentored 10 MBC founders so far, including Boateng.

"If you really want to understand the MBC program," Kossmann says, attend the hooding ceremony each May, where founders tell their stories. "There's not a dry eye in the house."

With each new stop, the OKB Hope Foundation brings diagnostics, vaccines, and essential care to communities far from traditional medical access in rural Ghana.

On a frigid morning this past January, University of Utah's Stena Center for Financial Technology hosted the 2025 Fintech Xchange conference in downtown Salt Lake. Inside the ballroom was a sea of people in dark suits and fleece. Outside in the lobby, Boateng sat on a couch wearing a Ghanaian robin's-egg-blue shirt and pants, holding Zoom meetings with his colleagues in Kumasi. He had come back to Salt Lake to connect with people in the business school and do what occupies much of his time these days: courting potential investors.

His goal, as always, is to keep his mobile clinics on the road and OneHealth+ on track. He has also added a third component: mental health education in Ghanaian high schools, as well as an AI therapy app. Only 70 psychiatrists, he notes, currently serve the country of 32 million people.

"Osei is a master at getting people passionate about his business and his vision," says mentor Kossmann. "He's one of the nicest, most soft-spoken, friendliest people you'll ever meet."

He reaches out, it seems, to everybody. At home in Ghana, he works constantly to recruit Ghanaian volunteers as well as community leaders and pastors in each village the OKB Hope Foundation visits. When he was in Salt Lake City in January, he made it a point to meet with Fernando Morales and Patrick Doss, two science and information systems master's students who had been working with him, via Zoom, to create data graphics for the mobile clinic.

"I just wanted to meet you in person and express my heartfelt gratitude," he told them.

Boateng splits his time between Ghana and the U.S., where he doggedly looks for donors and investors. So far, his mobile clinic has visited some 10,000 people in 80 villages—but he estimates there are 13 million rural Ghanaians without adequate health care. The OKB Hope Foundation has recently bought a second van, but the first van has traveled so many miles that it's on its last legs.

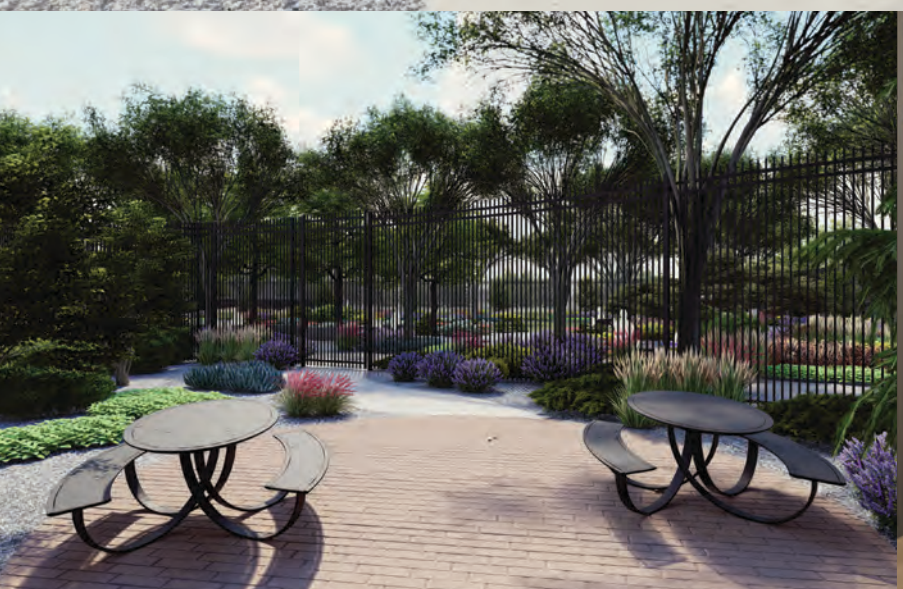
Asked if he ever gets discouraged—about trying to meet a payroll, about an ailing van, about investors who are interested but have not yet promised funds—he says, "Oh yeah, I do. You are doing all the good work, trying your possible best, but the resources are limited." But, he adds, "you also remember the people who might not get health care, who might lose their lives if you're not doing your work."

He recalls the first time he and his team took the mobile clinic on the road, headed to the Ashanti village of Bodomase. Torrential rains had flooded the area the day before, and the van got stuck in the mud. Their clothes drenched and their hands blistered from digging themselves out, they arrived hours late to the village. "But our spirits were unwavering," he says.

His goal, in the next five years, is to have 25 vans visiting all 16 regions in Ghana. And, eventually, he wants to bring consistent, high-quality medical care—and his OneHealth+ payment system—not just to remote areas of Ghana but beyond, to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. U

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

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS CARE CENTER



HUNTSMAN MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

WHERE CARE MEETS COURAGE

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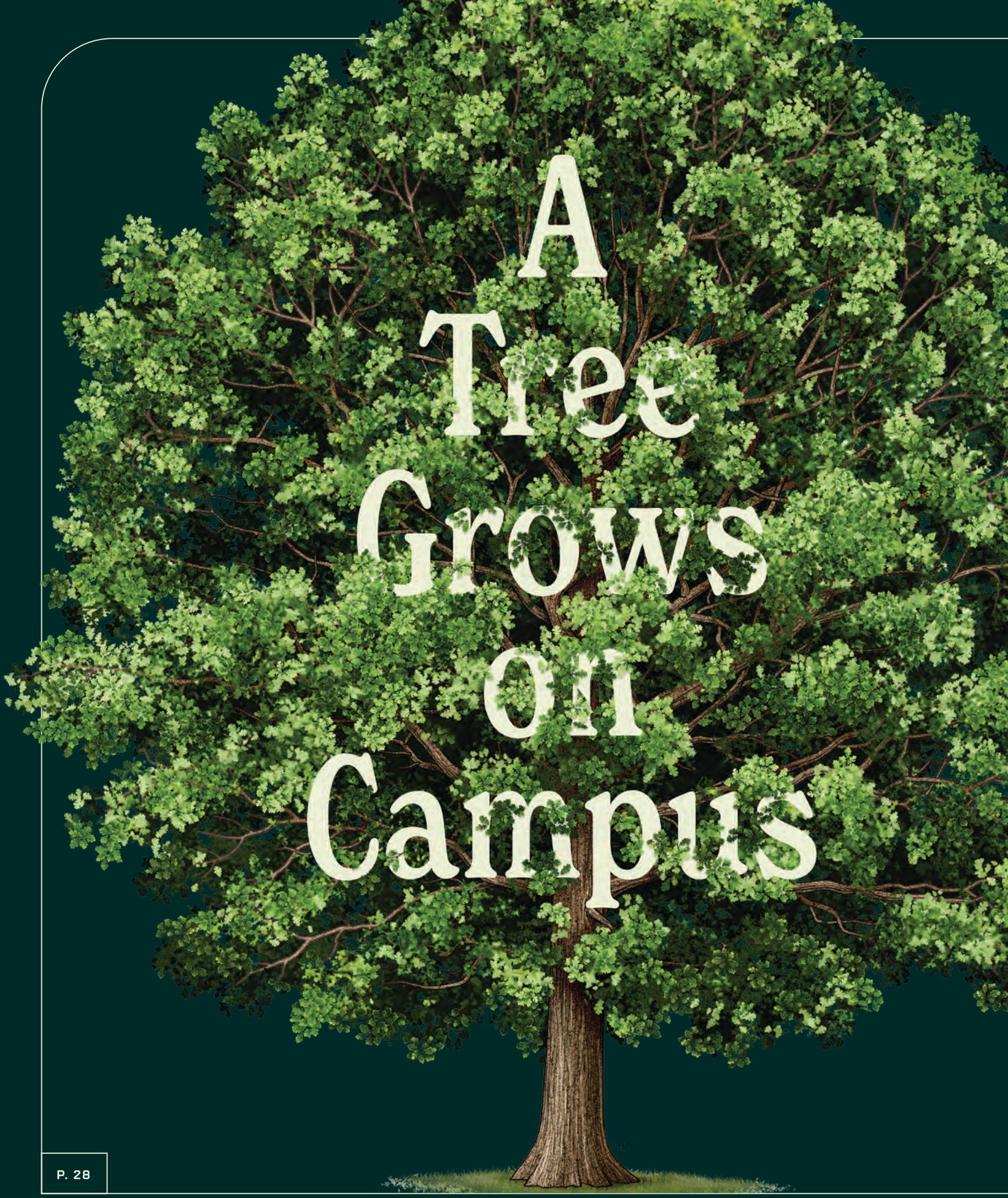

A
Tree
Grows
on
Campus

As the state's arboretum, the University of Utah campus is a living museum of awe-inspiring trees.

IN THE WORDS OF PLAYWRIGHT Anton Chekhov, "Life on earth is inconceivable without trees." Yet how often do we stop to marvel at these living wonders? Trees occupy the realm of superlatives—biggest, tallest, oldest—stretching the boundaries of what we imagine possible in a living thing. Consider Pando, the clonal colony of aspen in Utah's Fishlake National Forest, whose vast root system emerged at the end of the last Ice Age. A single organism, it ranks among the world's most ancient and largest living things, occupying 106 acres and weighing 13 million pounds.

Trees don't just inspire awe. They make our world more livable, creating pockets of serenity in a chaotic modern world. "The atmosphere up in a tree is totally different than down next to the asphalt," says Charles Perington, an arborist at the University of Utah's Red Butte Garden & Arboretum and a competitive tree climber. The science backs it up: these leafy giants filter pollution and cool the air, and their soothing hues and aromas measurably affect body and mind. Inhaling the scent of pine, for example, can lower cortisol and boost the immune system.

At the U, trees aren't merely landscaping—they're a living museum, born from one man's simple philosophy: "Let's plant it and see if it grows." That man was Walter P. Cottam, the university's Botany Department chair, whose fascination with trees led him to plant diverse species in what's now known as Cottam's Gulch.

His efforts spread across campus, transforming it into what the Utah legislature would designate the state's official arboretum in 1961. In 1985, the garden opened to expand the arboretum and establish permanent display gardens. Together, campus and Red Butte host 11,600 trees spanning more than 300 species.

"Every tree is unique," says Suzie Middleton, a certified arborist who has inventoried the entire campus collection. Her favorite, a Japanese zelkova planted by Cottam himself, is the largest specimen of its kind in Utah and one of 13 state champions at the U. Middleton oversees the university's tree tour (*facilities.utah.edu/tree-tour*), which allows visitors to explore the collection by scanning QR codes on placards attached to about 100 trees.

Under the canopy of Cottam's legacy, it's impossible not to pause and marvel. Read on to discover a few of the species you can visit in this remarkable resource.

BY LISA ANDERSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY IRENE LASCHI

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Bur-Gambel Oak

QUERCUS GAMBELII X MACROCARPA

UTAH'S STATE ARBORETUM · EST. 1961

"If I were going to show people one tree, this would be it," says Red Butte Garden & Arboretum's Charles Perington. In his eyes, it's the perfect backyard tree for Salt Lake City, marrying the native Gambel oak's climate suitability with the Midwestern bur oak's height and shade. With its long lifespan, "four generations of a family could all grow up underneath the same tree," Perington notes. The specimen is a result of Walter Cottam's world-renowned work crossing different oak species. Cottam's Grove at the garden is filled with his hybrid oaks, whose acorns are still sought after by botanical gardens and researchers worldwide.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Hybrid of Midwestern bur oak and southern Rockies Gambel oak
- Produces heavy amounts of acorns at a young age
- Acorns are low in tannin and make good flour

COORDINATES 40.76506, -111.82803

CAMPUS SITE

RED BUTTE GARDEN & ARBORETUM

ACROSS FROM THE DUMKE HORT. BUILDING

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Tulip Tree

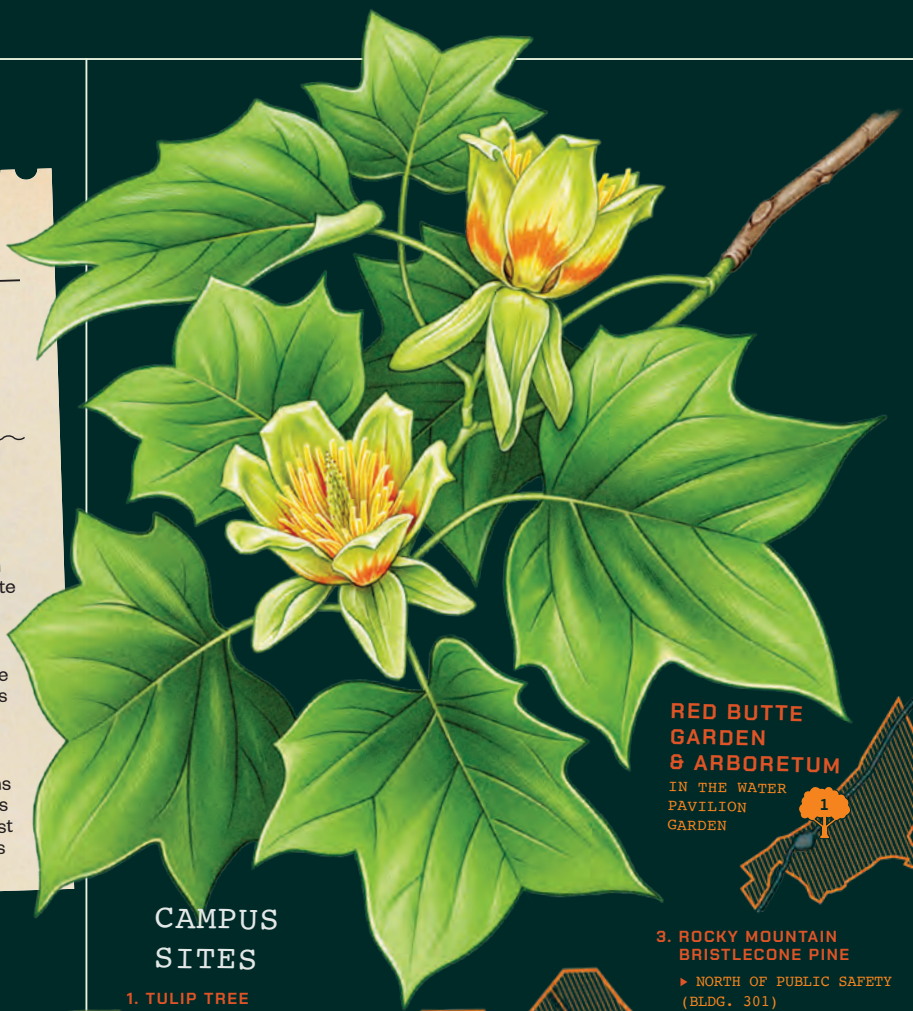
LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA

This eastern North American native is named for its stunning cup-shaped flowers that resemble prize-winning hothouse cultivars. In shades of luminous green to buttery yellow, with flame-like tangerine strokes at the base, the elegant blooms perch on the branches like pretty little teacups on saucers.

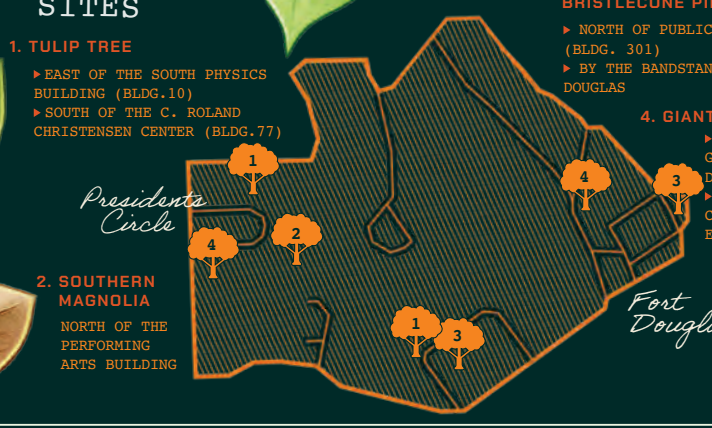
COORDINATES
40.766474, -111.849825
40.76096, -111.84356
40.767432, -111.824794

DID YOU KNOW?

- Native throughout eastern North American temperate forests
- Used by Cherokee for dugout canoes
- Popular wood species for organs because it makes a tight seal against pipes and valves



CAMPUS SITES



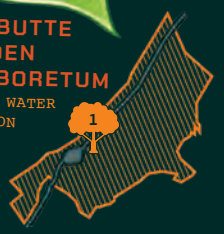
1. TULIP TREE
- EAST OF THE SOUTH PHYSICS BUILDING (BLDG.10)
- SOUTH OF THE C. ROLAND CHRISTENSEN CENTER (BLDG.77)

2. SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA
NORTH OF THE PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING

3. ROCKY MOUNTAIN BRISTLECONE PINE
- NORTH OF PUBLIC SAFETY (BLDG. 301)
- BY THE BANDSTAND IN FORT DOUGLAS

4. GIANT SEQUOIA
- CHAPEL GLEN GULLY IN FORT DOUGLAS
- SOUTH OF CROCKER SCIENCE CENTER

RED BUTTE GARDEN & ARBORETUM
IN THE WATER PAVILION GARDEN



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Southern Magnolia

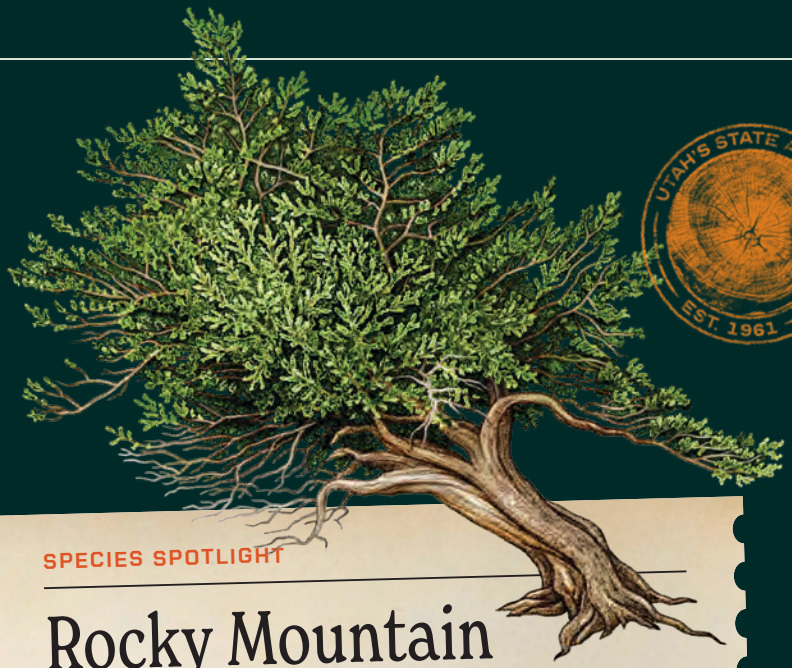
MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA

Native to more temperate climes, this broadleaf evergreen has no business thriving in northern Utah. But the campus specimen is doing "surprisingly well," says Suzie Middleton, even after being transplanted from its original site outside the now-demolished Orson Spencer Hall. The tree's creamy white blooms—which may grow as big as a dinner plate—are among the largest of any native North American tree.

COORDINATES 40.764341, -111.848104

DID YOU KNOW?

- Native to the southeastern United States
- Blooms smell like citronella
- Waxy coating helps leaves resist salt and pollution damage



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Rocky Mountain Bristlecone Pine

PINUS ARISTATA

For withstanding the extreme conditions of its arid montane habitat, the Rocky Mountain bristlecone is rewarded with a lifespan of two or three millennia. Its cousin, the Great Basin bristlecone pine, lives even longer. The world's oldest tree is a 4,853-year-old specimen named Methuselah, whose exact California location is kept secret to protect it from the unfortunate fate of the oldest tree on record—a nearly 5,000-year-old Great Basin National Park bristlecone felled in 1964.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Native to Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona
- Habitat: arid elevations from 7,500-12,000 ft.
- Ice and high winds shape the trunks into surreal, sculptural forms
- Dense, resinous wood resists pests

COORDINATES 40.760785, -111.841563; 40.76511, -111.83286

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Giant Sequoia

SEQUOIADENDRON GIGANTEUM

Sequoia groves—which naturalist John Muir called "God's first temples"—inspire such awe that entire national parks arose to protect them. The most massive tree species on earth, these giants can reach heights of 300 feet and trunk diameters of up to 40 feet. The largest tree in the world, General Sherman in Sequoia National Park, stands 275 feet tall and more than 36 feet wide at its base, containing enough wood to build more than 120 average-sized homes.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Current range: western slopes of California's Sierra Nevada
- Can live up to 3,400 years
- Grow 40 cubic feet of wood per year while maturing
- 18-inch-thick bark protects trunk from significant fire damage
- Genus can be traced to the Triassic Period 200 million years ago

COORDINATES 40.76586, -111.83639; 40.76369, -111.85151

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Osage Orange

MACLURA POMIFERA ▶

At first, this tree's neon-green, wrinkly, softball-sized fruit seems its most distinctive feature. But its wood has almost mythical properties. Durable, flexible, rot-resistant, and dense, it burns so hot that it can reportedly melt woodstoves. Indigenous tribes as far east as the Ohio River Valley and as far west as the Rockies prized and traded for bows made from Osage orange wood. Plains settlers relied on the trees to establish their homesteads, weaving the tough, thorny branches into makeshift barbed-wire fences said to be "horse high, hog tight, and bull strong."

DID YOU KNOW?

- Native to Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas
- Named in part for the citrus scent of its fruit when ripe
- One of the hottest-burning wood species
- So prized among the peoples he encountered that Meriwether Lewis sent cuttings to Thomas Jefferson

COORDINATES 40.766473, -111.835206

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Ginkgo

◀ GINKGO BILOBA

One of Earth's oldest tree species, this "living fossil" has changed little since it first appeared on the evolutionary timeline. *Ginkgo biloba* is the only surviving member of the order Ginkgoales, which predates the dinosaurs at more than 290 million years old. The ginkgo's iconic fan-shaped leaves give the tree an almost sequined look and turn a show-stopping yellow come fall.

COORDINATES
40.76457, -111.84904

DID YOU KNOW?

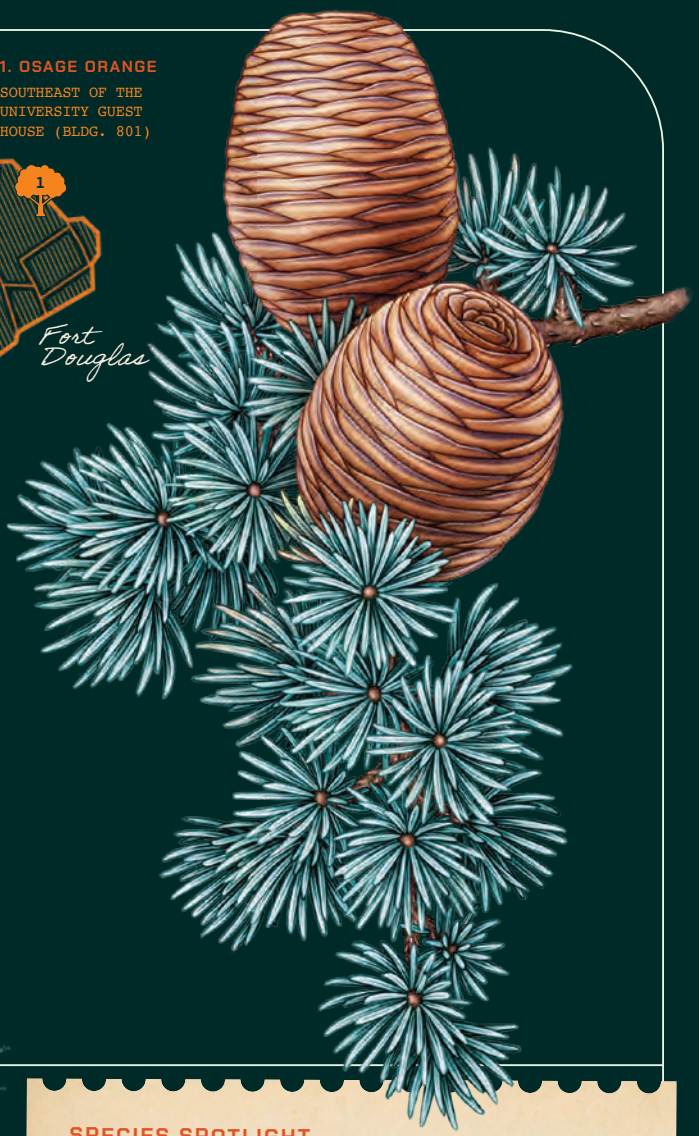
- Native to China, Korea, and Japan
- Can live up to 3,500 years
- Grew in North America 15 million years ago
- Produces chemicals that protect it from disease and drought
- Used in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years

CAMPUS SITES

1. OSAGE ORANGE
SOUTHEAST OF THE UNIVERSITY GUEST HOUSE (BLDG. 801)

2. GINKGO
SOUTHWEST OF THE PARK BUILDING (BLDG. 1)

3. BLUE ATLAS CEDAR
SOUTH OF ARCHITECTURE (BLDG. 37) AND NORTH OF UTAH MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (BLDG. 35)



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Blue Atlas Cedar

CEDRUS ATLANTICA 'GLAUCA'

Lacy and graceful, the blue Atlas cedar is a prized ornamental tree in gardens around the world. Clusters of short needles along outstretched branches create a textured, airy look, while the needles' waxy coating—which helps them conserve water—casts an icy blue hue. One of only four true cedar species, it provides habitat for the endangered Barbary macaque in North Africa's Atlas Mountains.

COORDINATES
40.760749, -111.843923

DID YOU KNOW?

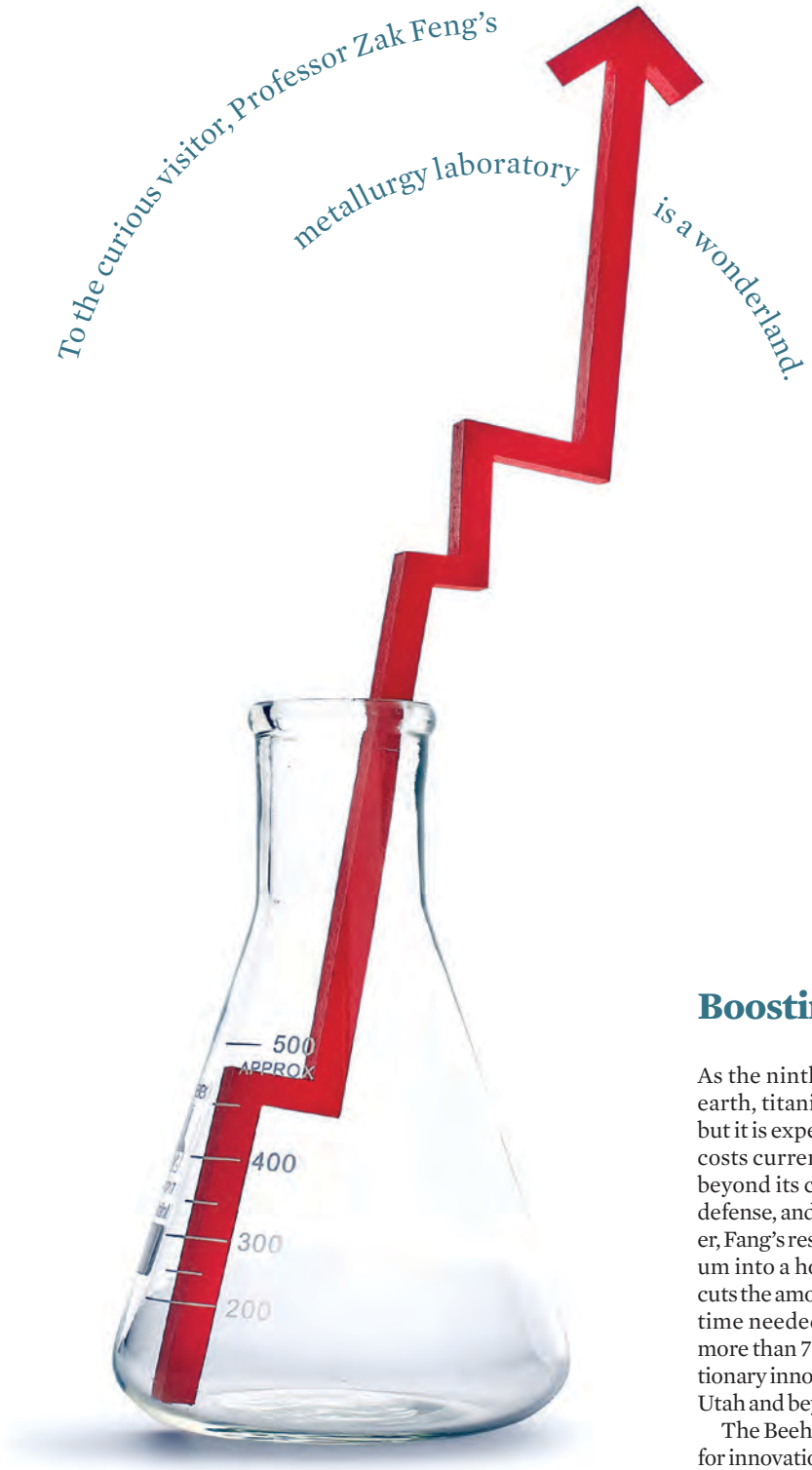
- Native to the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Algeria
- Produces compounds that cool the surface of needles, preventing water loss
- Bark produces an aromatic oil used in health and beauty products
- Ancient Egyptians used oil for embalming
- Moth-repellent wood was historically used to make chests and wardrobes

University research is America's most powerful and underappreciated economic driver—fueling innovation, launching companies, and improving lives.

Research's Ripple Effect

BY AMY CHOATE-NIELSEN

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DB WORKS



In this place, where machines hum and hiss and expel so much heat the air conditioning can't keep up, extraordinary things take shape: A swatch of flexible chainmail, a honeycomb-latticed hollow football, a prosthetic implant for a broken bone—all made from powdered metal—may catch your eye. But the Titanium Additive Manufacturing Research Center is much more than a 3D printer's dream.

Here, the next breakthrough in manufacturing is baking. Fang's industry partner, IperionX, calls it titanium's "Bessemer moment," echoing Henry Bessemer's 1854 invention that transformed steel into the ubiquitous backbone of railroads, skyscrapers, and machinery. The implication is staggering: Fang's research at the U could be the key to creating a sustainable, affordable titanium supply chain in the United States. And it's only one example of many groundbreaking explorations unfolding at universities across the country.

In Utah, higher education drives the state's economy through innovation, job and business creation, and workforce training. While medical advancements, start-up companies, and even the World Wide Web have flourished through the U, vital research now faces threats that could slow its progress. As the race to develop crucial technologies intensifies, there is precious little time to lose.

That may be one reason why, during spring break, Fang's students are in the lab running experiments. This work takes years. "There must be more than 20 different process methods purported to be low-cost, but they never succeeded," Fang says. "This time, we're going to be the ones who do."

Boosting Innovation

As the ninth most common element on earth, titanium is not considered rare—but it is expensive to process. Prohibitive costs currently limit use of the material beyond its critical role in the aerospace, defense, and chemical industries; however, Fang's research could transform titanium into a household metal. His method cuts the amount of energy and production time needed to process the element by more than 75 percent, making it a revolutionary innovation that could impact all of Utah and beyond.

The Beehive State ranks first in the U.S. for innovation capacity and outcomes, per the Innovation Intelligence Index. Home to 16 public colleges and universities, including two research-intensive universities, Utah's education system catalyzes the state's top innovation ecosystems in aeronautics, energy production, finance, technology, and life sciences. With this valuable system, Utah is positioned as a rising start-up hub, with more than 330 companies launched from the U alone.

"Higher education is Utah's most powerful economic engine. We connect research innovation with market needs. And we don't just create companies—we build healthier communities and solve problems that matter to people right here in our state," U President Taylor Randall HBA'90 says. "That's the real return on investment."

Under Randall's vision, the U aims to produce paradigm-shifting research with unsurpassed societal impact. That mission requires better pipelines to move

ideas into production. In 2024, the U launched the Applied Medical Engineering Lab and its first Remote and Austere Conditions Grand Challenge, offering up to $1 million to faculty developing solutions for rural communities and military personnel and others in isolated environments. The U also partnered with EPIC Ventures to provide faculty entrepreneurs with funding, business expertise, and advisory networks to help turn promising ideas into thriving start-ups.

"As a major research university, our challenge is making scientific discovery faster and increasing innovation's real-world impact," says Erin Rothwell PhD'04, U vice president for research. "The stakes are high—if we don't accelerate this process now, our children won't enjoy the same quality of life we have in 20 years."

To speed up life sciences discoveries, the U will complete construction on a one-of-a-kind building, the James LeVoy Sorenson Center for Medical Innovation (SCMI), thanks, in large part, to a generous lead gift of $22 million from the Sorenson Legacy Foundation. SCMI will house innovation labs, symposium space, manufacturing sterilization facilities, fresh tissue operation tables, and start-up incubators. "A building like this just doesn't exist," Mark Paul BA'87, executive director of the Center for Medical Innovation, notes. "This allows us to shine in a way that no other university can."

As the former global division president of Stryker Neurovascular, a medical technology leader based in Salt Lake City, Paul understands how the life sciences create jobs across the economic spectrum—from physicians to manufacturing workers. Utah ranks as the third fastest-growing state in the life sciences industry, with some 1,600 companies spanning medical devices, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and imaging.

Paul now oversees the Bench to Bedside program—launched 15 years ago and now with 325+ inventions to its credit—connecting student inventors with manufacturing opportunities. From a cancer-illuminating portable wand to an expandable tool that reinforces broken bones, the products students design could transform medical treatment in Utah and beyond.

"I think this next generation will be the greatest inventors in the history of mankind," Paul says. "They were born into innovation."

Building the Economy

Students come to Fang's lab from various paths, including manufacturing, and chemical and metallurgical engineering. Together, these undergraduate and graduate students are forging a manufacturing workforce as strong as the titanium structures they're fusing with lasers and heat.

Across the country, a skilled workforce is essential to attracting employers. Utah's position as home to the nation's third most well-trained and educated workforce owes much to the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) schools, which enrolled more than 240,000 students in the 2024 school year alone.

"Right now, technological advancements are driving a knowledge economy that demands the most well-educated citizenry and well-trained labor force in human history," Natalie Gochnour BS'84 MS'88, director of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, recently told reporters at a press conference about the value of higher education. "Training is what universities do to help people get a job. Education includes intellectual and personal development that's deemed essential to civil society. At Utah's institutions of higher learning, we do both."

72% of students graduating from USHE schools earn high-yield degrees.

In 2024, about 72 percent of students graduating from USHE schools earned degrees that relate to high-wage and high-demand jobs. These are the much-needed future mechanical engineers, nurse practitioners, and software developers of the state. Each engineering or computer science job in Utah supports up to two additional jobs, according to a 2022 report from the Gardner Institute.

Beyond workforce development, USHE schools themselves supported approximately 132,000 jobs in 2024, about 5.5 percent of jobs statewide. Higher education also directly contributed $12 billion to Utah's economy—with the U and Utah State University, the state's research institutions, accounting for $10 billion of that impact.

Research universities attract substantial outside funding. These grants percolate into the economy through facilities and administrative costs, covering everything from utilities to building maintenance. Annual research funding brings $134 million to USU and nearly $700 million to the U. For every dollar invested in education, the economic return more than doubles—outpacing industries like oil and gas extraction or air transportation, according to a recent report from the Gardner Institute.

10 U-BORN BUSINESS GIANTS

1 ADOBE INC.

Co-founded in 1982 by John Warnock BS'61 MS'64 PhD'69, the $21 billion global software giant employs more than 26,000 people worldwide. Warnock's innovations—including PostScript, Illustrator, and the PDF—revolutionized how the world creates and shares digital content.

2 ATARI

Nolan Bushnell BS'69 revolutionized home entertainment when he co-founded Atari in 1972, which created the first commercially successful arcade game, *Pong*. The company's golden era defined the modern video game industry.

3 BLACKROCK NEUROTECH

A global leader in brain-computer interface technology, this enterprise was co-founded by U professor of electrical and computer engineering Florian Solzbacher. Its groundbreaking Utah Array—first developed at the U—enables people with paralysis to control robotic arms, computer cursors, and more using only their thoughts.

4 BIOFIRE DIAGNOSTICS

This disruptive company traces its origins to the U, where Kirk Ririe BS'05, Randy Rasmussen PhD'98, and Carl Wittwer (Residency'88) collaborated on early inventions. BioFire has transformed infectious disease testing with the FilmArray system—now a hospital mainstay for rapid detection of respiratory, gastrointestinal, and bloodstream infections.

5 EVANS & SUTHERLAND

Founded in 1968 by computing visionaries David Evans BA'49 PhD'53 and Ivan Sutherland, a U professor of computer science, Evans & Sutherland cracked open the digital frontier with innovations in 3D graphics that launched virtual reality into existence. Their revolutionary work not only shaped how we visualize technology—it helped ignite Utah's explosive tech boom.

"The economic impact of higher education is multi-pronged," Rothwell says. "You can't just pinpoint it to start-ups or bringing in federal grants. It's a complete ecosystem that changes the nature of the economy and the future of Utah."

Supporting Research

For someone who holds the world's only patent on how to create titanium primary metal with less energy, emissions, and cost, Fang is decidedly humble. He left his industry job of 11 years to come to the U where he would be paid less but could research more. "Working for a company, you are assigned to one product. That's your thing," Fang says. "I like the university environment, where we have more freedom to work on different areas."

Fang's research has spanned hard materials, hydrogen storage, refractory, reactive, and rare earth metals, and now, additive manufacturing—a field that didn't exist 20 years ago. The ability to adapt and respond to technological advances is crucial to navigating the future, especially now, as university research in the U.S. faces unstable federal funding and is losing ground in critical technology leadership.

From 2003 to 2007, the U.S. dominated 60 of 64 foundational technologies that shape the global economy, national security, defense, energy, health, and more, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Today, the U.S. leads in just seven areas—vaccines, quantum computing, genetic engineering, and nuclear medicine among them. The race to reclaim technological leadership is on, and leaders in Utah are feeling the heat.

"We all know that we are in an arms race to control artificial intelligence," Utah Senate President Stuart Adams BA'78 said in his opening address of the Utah legislative session in January. "The country that controls AI will, in turn, control the world."

Adams urged Utahns to lead the way, and the U is already answering that call with Randall's One-U Responsible AI Initiative, which aims to harness AI for societal good. Researchers across campus are tackling similarly urgent issues that can save lives and improve the world. Scientists are studying food scarcity and ways to leverage communications research and psychology to develop innovative mental health interventions. Meanwhile, Utah's geology—with 40 of the 50 critical minerals needed for emerging technologies—makes the U a strategic hub for geoscience research with national security and defense applications.

"What many people don't realize is that university research is quietly powering economic growth in ways that go far beyond campus," Randall explains. "What might look like abstract work in a laboratory directly translates to jobs, new companies, and innovations that solve real-world problems. Investment in higher education research is actually one of the most powerful economic engines we have—and the impact ripples through every part of society."

Amy Choate-Nielsen is associate director of strategic communications at the U.

ORTHOBOLT

Mitchell Kirkham BIO'20 and Brandon Wilde had a hunch they could revolutionize bone repair. "Traditional pedicle screws aren't much more innovative than something you would grab from a hardware store," Wilde explains. The duo earned the 2024 Bench to Bedside Grand Prize Runner-up Award with their solution—OrthoBolt, an expandable orthopedic screw for optimal anchoring in osteoporotic bone. They're now finalizing their first prototype for testing.

C-BLU

Libby Brooks and her team won the 2024 Bench to Bedside competition with a product that could improve cervical cancer screenings, especially in low-resource areas. The C-Blu device causes cervical cancer lesions to fluoresce, making them easier to see and diagnose. With $20,000 in milestone funding from the competition, the team is now refining its third prototype and preparing for clinical testing. "We are motivated by the idea of making something that could actually change people's lives," Brooks says.

6

PIXAR

The groundbreaking animation studio that Ed Catmull BS'69 PhD'74 helped launch in 1986 transformed filmmaking with revolutionary computer animation—built on technology Catmull developed at the U.

7

RECURSION

From U spinout to $2 billion biotech powerhouse, this venture co-founded by Chris Gibson PhD'13 now operates as a clinical-stage techbio company running one of the world's most powerful supercomputers to decode biology and industrialize drug discovery at massive scale.

8

SILICON GRAPHICS AND NETSCAPE

Jim Clark PhD'74 shaped the digital age with two trailblazing companies—Silicon Graphics revolutionized 3D computer graphics for film and design, while Netscape launched the world's first widely used web browser.

9

UTAH FORGE

Led by U scientists, this $218 million Department of Energy-funded project is developing enhanced geothermal systems that could make clean electricity available almost anywhere by harnessing heat from deep within the Earth.

10

WORDPERFECT

Co-founded in 1979 by Alan Ashton HBA'66 PhD'70, it became the world's leading word processing software in the 1980s and helped turn Utah Valley into a tech hub long before it was dubbed Silicon Slopes.

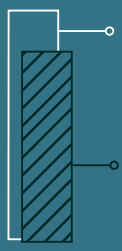
Powering Utah's Future

How the U and Public Higher Education Drive Economic Growth, Innovation, and Discovery

1 Education: Utah's Economic Engine

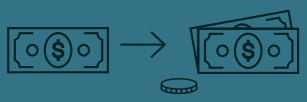
#3
most educated workforce in the U.S.

130,000+
jobs supported by Utah's public colleges and universities (2023)



$12.1B
total economic impact of public higher ed

$10B
from research universities



2.1x economic multiplier
Every $1 invested in public education more than doubles its return—outpacing industries like air transportation, oil and gas, and real estate

2 U Research Impacts

$700 M
in annual research funding

$350M
in off-campus income impact

8,300
research employees

$248
million in salaries

3 Innovation and Industry Impact

Statewide: Utah's Innovation Ecosystem

#1
in the nation for innovation capacity and outcomes

#3

fastest-growing state for life sciences

The U: University of Utah Innovation

TOP **10**
public university for **patents** issued and innovation-related **revenue**

NO. **13**
The U's Research Park national ranking for innovation district **prosperity** and opportunity

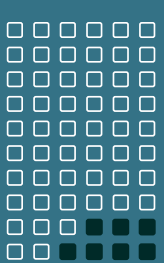
330+
companies launched based on U technologies

Average annual innovation output

196	203	26	11
patents	invention disclosures	license agreements	start-ups

4 What's at Stake: Slowing Federal Investment Puts Progress at Risk

25%
of U.S. post-WWII productivity growth came from federally funded research and development



The U.S. has dropped from leading **60** of 64 key global technologies (2003–07) to just **7** today

Research grants can take

8–20 months to secure, delaying discoveries and solutions

Why it Matters:
Without timely support, even groundbreaking ideas stall. To stay competitive—and to solve real-world problems—research institutions like the U need faster pathways from lab to impact.

Sources: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, Innovation Intelligence Index, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, National Bureau of Economic Research, U.S. Census Bureau, National Institutes of Health

Forever U

Students and alumni build connections over impromptu mini-golf in the Union Building.

Mentors Matter

From first introductions to future careers, alumni are helping U students find their way

Five cold messages a day. That was the challenge Spencer Poll set for himself on the Forever Utah Network (FUN), the U's networking hub. What the junior aspiring HR professional didn't expect was how those simple outreach attempts would transform into three to four weekly conversations with U alums—and ultimately reshape what he thought possible for his career after graduation.

"Honestly, it was something essential that I never realized I needed," Poll says. "There's just something helpful about connecting with other Utah grads. I feel so much more prepared now, so much more confident about my future."

That confidence boost isn't just feel-good fluff. A recent Gallup survey found that people with mentors were nearly twice as likely to be engaged at work and reported significantly higher overall well-being. The findings also show that employers consistently report that robust professional networks often lead to stronger career outcomes.

U Alumni has made connecting students with experienced mentors a core mission. Their creative approaches cut through the intimidation factor of traditional networking—like turning a room in the Union Building into an impromptu mini-golf course where conversations flow naturally between putts, or hosting casual speed mentoring sessions that pair students with industry insiders. These low-pressure environments turn networking from a chore into genuine relationship-building, says Karen Ashton BS'80, associate director of networking at U Alumni.

"We have these outstanding students who are just looking for a nudge in the right direction," notes Ashton. "A few quick emails from alumni could make all the difference for students. What might be a short time investment for an alum could profoundly change a student's trajectory."

The Forever Utah Network has already attracted over 6,000 alumni and 2,000 students. Beyond mentorship, it's a vibrant hub for job opportunities, professional networking, and community building.

Your experience could be the spark that ignites a student's future path—join the community at *forever.utah.edu*.

ALUMNI NEWS ROUNDUP

Mark your calendars for U Alumni events this fall. Upcoming opportunities to network, connect with friends, and forge new connections include:

Utah Night at the Colorado Rockies
Denver, Colorado
Monday, August 5

San Diego and Los Angeles
Various events before the Utah vs. UCLA Game
San Diego: August 27
Los Angeles: August 29

FALL REGIONAL EVENTS
Visit alumni.utah.edu *for exact dates*
Seattle, WA
September

St. George, UT
September

Boston, MA
October

San Francisco, CA
October

Idaho Falls, ID
November

Houston, TX
November

Austin, TX
November

AWAY GAME FOOTBALL TAILGATES
Utah at UCLA
August 30

Utah at West Virginia
September 27

Utah at BYU
October 18

HOMECOMING WEEK 2025 (October 18-25)
Swoop Sprint
October 18

Alumni Reunion of 5's
Grads from a class ending in "5" (1955, 1965, etc.)
October 22
Additional Homecoming events and details will be announced on *alumni.utah.edu*. Follow us on social media @UtahAlumni for all the latest.

Ask

Weaving Legacies

All artists tell stories. "But as Native artists, we tell legacies," says Kassie John BS'22 (Diné), an illustrator and designer whose work is inspired by the generations-old motifs in her grandmother's tapestries and rugs. A creative soul at heart, John switched her major from pre-med to multidisciplinary design after taking the U's Intro to Design Thinking. Now she applies innovative problem-solving and cultural insight to her job in public health. Recently crowned Miss Indian World 2024-25, she also travels across the U.S. and Canada to meet with Indigenous communities and share their legacies with the world.

Describe your favorite project from the multidisciplinary design program. I created a learning tool with my sister, who teaches Navajo in the Davis School District. I designed letter blocks featuring the Navajo letter system and some vocabulary. I included an audio component as well, since Navajo is more orally based. It was really cool to create a resource to connect kids to their culture.

What do you do at the Utah Department of Health? I work as a health program specialist and am focused on the opioid and tobacco programs. In my role, I get to work with tribal leaders from across the state. One project we're working on is a program to educate people about the difference between the harmful effects of commercial tobacco and the cultural role of traditional tobacco in Native communities.

How did your design degree prepare you for this job? I didn't see the connection between public health and design until one of my supervisors said, "I notice the way you're thinking and problem solving, and the way you see how wellness, culture, and community intersect." I'm able to connect things and come up with unique solutions.

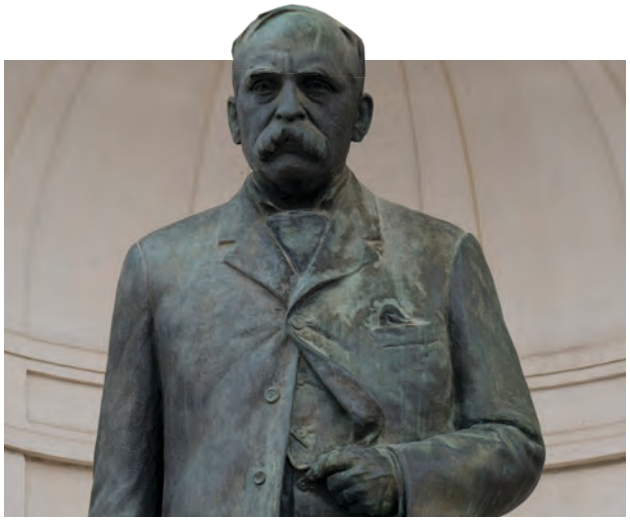
Talk about your role as Miss Indian World. I'm a cultural goodwill ambassador. I represent not only the Navajo people but all Indigenous people around the world. My favorite part has been visiting tribal communities and learning about other people's stories. That's the whole reason I ran for Miss Indian World—to highlight and share Indigenous stories as much as I can.

PHOTO BY ERKWANA JOHNSON

Plates with Purpose

U license plates are transforming Utah roads into a rolling display of school pride. When you choose a U plate for $40 annually, you're not just showing your support for the University of Utah—you're also contributing to critical initiatives for student-athletes. Last year, drivers sporting either the bold block U or classic interlocking design on their bumpers helped generate significant funds for students. These plates do more than show school pride—they create possibilities with every mile. Head to *utahplates.com* to join the drive for school pride.

PHOTO BY DAVE TITENSOR



The Founders Day honors are among the highest given annually by the U.

Honoring Excellence on Founders Day

Meet the remarkable recipients of one of the university's highest honors for leadership, service, and innovation.

Since its founding in 1850, the University of Utah has grown into one of the nation's leading public universities. Each year, Founders Day honors distinguished alumni who have made lasting contributions to their communities, professions, and the university. These awards are among the institution's highest honors. Meet this year's recipients.

Distinguished Alumni Award Recipients

M. John Ashton BS'66 JD'69
John Ashton served nearly 30 years as executive director of the U's Office of Alumni Relations, helping launch *Continuum* (now *Utah Magazine*), the alumni scholarship program, and the annual food drive. A former Alumni Association president, he also held leadership roles with the Hinckley Institute, University Hospital, and national alumni groups. A former partner at Ray, Quinney & Nebeker, he has been active in the Utah State Bar, Republican Party, and Salt Lake Rotary Club.

Reverend France Davis MA'78
The Rev. France Davis participated in the historic Selma to Montgomery march led by Martin Luther King, Jr., before himself becoming a civil rights leader and spiritual guide. Ordained at Oakland's Center Street Baptist Church, he joined Salt Lake's Calvary Baptist Church in 1972 as pastor. A strong advocate for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, he taught in the U's Communication and Ethnic Studies departments for 40 years and also helped lead national and local faith organizations.

Lisa Eccles BA'86
As president and COO of the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, Lisa Eccles has helped guide nearly $800 million in grants, transforming communities across Utah. Her impact extends through service on numerous boards, including the National Park Foundation, Utah Symphony | Utah Opera, and the U's Board of Trustees, where she chaired the Campus Master Plan Committee. In 2024, she was named one of Utah's Most Influential Women.

Cecelia H. Foxley MA'65 PhD'68
Cece Foxley dedicated her career to higher education, serving over a decade as Utah's higher education commissioner—the first and only woman in the role. She led the University of Iowa's first Affirmative Action program and later completed a three-year Regents Professorship at the U. A published author, she also advised education and government organizations and served on national higher education commissions.

Ambassador John Price BS'56 & Marcia Price BA'57
John Price, founder of JP Realty, Inc., oversaw major Utah arts projects, including Symphony Hall (now Abravanel Hall) and the Capitol Theatre restoration. He served as U.S. ambassador to Mauritius, Seychelles, and Comoros (2002–05) and held leadership roles with the U and the 2002 Winter Olympics. Marcia Price, who received an honorary doctorate from the U in 2006, is a longtime arts advocate. She chaired the Utah Arts Council and served on the Kennedy Center National Committee for the Performing Arts. Their philanthropy includes funding the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, the U's Theatre Arts Building, and our future computing and engineering building, along with the S.J. Quinney Refugee Law Clinic. In recognition of their support, the U renamed its engineering school the John and Marcia Price College of Engineering in 2023.

Nominations for the 2026 Founders Day Awards are open through Sept. 5. Visit alumni.utah.edu *to submit.*

Web Extra Don't miss honoree videos online at *magazine.utah.edu/founders2025*

Class Notes

'60s

Keith B. McMullin BA'66 was honored at the South Valley Chamber of Commerce's Titan Awards for his contributions to leadership, business, and community service. McMullin spent more than a decade as CEO and president of Deseret Management Corp., which includes the *Deseret News*, KSL and its broadcast partners, and Beneficial Life Insurance, among other properties. McMullin is a prominent leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and currently serves on the David Eccles School of Business Advisory Board. The annual Titan Awards celebrate leaders who have made a significant impact and difference in Utah.

'70s

R. Don Green BS'77 MS'82 MPA'81—a veteran and former administrator, lecturer, and researcher at the U—is now an active member of the U Alumni Veterans and Friends Alumni Chapter on the Forever Utah Network, helping connect fellow alumni veterans and the U. Green attended the U.S. Military Academy and is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and also holds a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. He says, "I believe that if we enlighten one another, we are stronger together."

'90s

J. Napier-Pearce

Jennifer Napier-Pearce BA'91 is the new chief of staff of The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation. Napier-Pearce supports the foundation's mission of improving the quality of life across Utah. She most recently served as a senior advisor and director of communications to Governor Spencer Cox and was previously executive editor of *The Salt Lake Tribune.*

Several alumni participated in the recent U alum panel and networking event "From the U to Hollywood" in Los Angeles, including panelists **Jeffery McFarland** JD'91, an entertainment litigation attorney; **Rick Page** BA'94, a cinematographer who has worked on shows such as *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*; **Jeff Dixon** BA'99, whose Emmy-nominated animated show *Curses!* premiered last year on AppleTV+; and **Stephanie Groff** BA'21, a writer who recently sold a show to Sony. The panel discussion was moderated by **Jared Ruga** MFA'16 MBA'16 JD'16, an Emmy-winning and GLAAD-nominated producer.

Thomas Wei-Tsu Tang

Thomas Wei-Tsu Tang BS'94 is founder and president of Apantac LLC, a global leader in design and development of image signal processing equipment. The company's clients include TV stations, news studios, and sports broadcasters like ESPN and Fox Sports, along with large social media companies like Google, Meta, and Amazon, which use Apantac products for their worldwide global event centers. Tang and his siblings recently gave back to the U and honored their parents, Dr. Mei-Chun Tang and Pi-Yung Chen, with a permanent named space in the Stewart Building, currently being renovated.

Jonathan Judge HBS'98 was appointed to the board of directors for Waymaker, a nonprofit organization that provides counseling, education, shelter, conflict resolution, and support services to struggling Orange County children and families. Judge is head of the Private Labor and Employment Group's advice and counsel team at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo, where he represents employers in both the private and public sectors in employment advice and counsel matters.

'00s

Pamela Balluck

Pamela Balluck MFA'00 PhD'08 won first place for short fiction in the Utah Original Writing Competition with her entry "Phone In Hand." Balluck serves as an associate editor for the University of Rhode Island's *Ocean State Review* and teaches writing at the U. Her essay "Parts of a Chair" previously won the *Southeast Review*'s Narrative Nonfiction Contest, and her fiction has been published in the *Western Humanities Review* (as winner of the Competition for Utah Writers), has been a finalist in *SER*'s World's Best Short-Short Story Competition, and can also be found in *PANK*, *Night Train*, *Freight Stories*, *The Way We Sleep*, *Prompt Press*, and *Green Mountains Review*, among other journals and anthologies.

Pete Johnson BA'03 is currently president and CEO of Koloma, Inc., which is pioneering clean energy through geologic hydrogen—a naturally occurring hydrogen source in the Earth's mantle that could be a powerful tool to help move toward lower carbon energy forms. A Salt Lake native, Johnson was greatly inspired to "do great things" by East High teachers and later motivated by U professors to start his journey into physics and energy. He went on to earn a master's degree in mechanical engineering at Stanford, found and build several leading companies, and work as a venture capitalist and investor in Silicon Valley before his latest endeavor.

Wade Hunt BA'04 has been named president of MultiCare Deaconess and Valley hospitals, building relationships throughout the Inland Northwest. Hunt served the last three years as president of MultiCare Pulse Heart Institute, where he oversaw growth across key areas, and previously spent four years as Deaconess Hospital's chief operating officer. Before joining MultiCare's team in 2017, Hunt served as the chief operating officer and interim chief executive officer for PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver, Washington. In addition to his undergraduate degree, he holds a Master of Health Administration from Saint Louis University.

Margot Singer

Margot Singer PhD'05 has a new memoir-in-essays, *Secret Agent Man*, an exploration of family history, memory, and the meaning of home. A professor of creative writing at Denison University, Singer is the author of a novel, *Underground Fugue*, and a linked short story collection, *The Pale of Settlement*. She is also the co-author, with **Nicole Walker** MFA'01 PhD'06, of *Bending Genre: Essays on Creative Nonfiction*. She is the recipient of the Flannery O'Connor Award, the Edward Lewis Wallant Award, the Reform Judaism Prize, the Glasgow Prize, and the James Jones First Novel Fellowship, as well as grants from the NEA and the Ohio Arts Council.

SPOTLIGHT

Inspired by a great away-game experience, **Mary Thornton** BS'71 (left) founded the U's FanUp Ambassador program, in which home football game volunteers work to establish a positive, welcoming environment for all campus visitors. Celebrating 10 years in 2025, the program now boasts nearly 100 volunteers, ranging from retirees to recent grads who miss being in The MUSS. Thornton says the oldest volunteer is now 83 and has participated since the program's start. "I've visited several universities that have had outstanding sportsmanship campaigns. As a visitor to their campuses, I thoroughly enjoyed my experiences. I want visitors to feel the same way when they attend games at the U. As we showcase our best selves through good sportsmanship, our visitors are sure to leave with similar good impressions of our fans and university."

SPOTLIGHT

Chris Peterson MPA'05 MS'08 is leading the Utah Wildlife Walls project, which seeks to install at least one monumental wildlife mural in each of Utah's 29 counties. Led by Peterson, writer Brett Prettyman BS'94, and the Utah Wildlife Federation, the project began in 2022 with the installation of a 120-foot Bonneville cutthroat trout mural in Salt Lake City. Nine walls have now been completed, with upcoming projects including murals of kokanee salmon in Wasatch County, bobcat in Sevier County, pinyon jay in Garfield County, and bison, pronghorn, and burrowing owls in Davis County. Peterson's work reflects his deep love of wild places and wildlife.

'10s

Taner Paşamehmetoğlu

Taner Paşamehmetoğlu BA'13 is an award-winning multidisciplinary visual artist. Most recently, he completed a one-year artist residency with the City of Sacramento, working with its Office of Climate Action and Sustainability to engage and enlighten the community on climate-related issues. Previously, he worked with Real Salt Lake, several creative advertising agencies, and the Utah Division of Highway Safety and Utah Division of Natural Resources on impactful cause-marketing campaigns. At the U, he was a photojournalist and photo editor for *The Daily Utah Chronicle*.

Virginia LeBaron

Virginia LeBaron PhD'13 published *Caring in Context: An Ethnography of Cancer Nursing in India*, which is based on her research as a Fulbright Fellow during her time as a doctoral student at the U's College of Nursing. The book details "how most of the world experiences cancer, and how nurses bear witness and respond to the suffering of others when they have little means to help—or for complex reasons, choose not to."

Five U alums were members of the Limelight Rainforest team, which placed first in the world and earned $5 million in the global XPRIZE Rainforest competition. The competition challenged competitors to inventory species living in a section of tropical rainforest in just 24 hours and produce the most impactful real-time insights within 48 hours. Alumni team members include **Johanna Varner** PhD'15, the team's director of strategic planning & communications; **Ryan Bixenmann** PhD'11, director of operations; **Lora Richards** PhD'06, advisor for insect identification; **Julie Allen** BS'03, lead of bioinformatics; and **Eric Fortune** (Postdoc '95-'01), lead systems engineer. The alums were part of a team of more than 60 engineers, biologists, anthropologists, and Indigenous people. XPRIZE creates large-scale incentive competitions aimed at solving humanity's greatest challenges.

Kelsie Green

Kelsie Green MBA'16 is the new chief executive officer and chief nursing officer for Cache Valley Hospital. Green holds a BSN from Boise State University in addition to her degree from the U, where she has been serving as an adjunct professor. She was recently assistant vice president of HCA Healthcare's Virtual Patient Logistic Center.

Nancy E. Rivera

Nancy E. Rivera MFA'16 received the Jay and Susie Tyrrell Excellence in Works by Hand Award for her series "No Present To Remember." Rivera's work combines family photographs from her childhood in Mexico with salt from Utah's Great Salt Lake and Bonneville Salt Flats. According to Rivera, each piece in the collection "is a reflection on how these disparate landscapes have shaped my identity and experiences over the years."

Marcus Williams

Marcus Williams BS'19, most recently a safety with the NFL's Baltimore Ravens, has opened MW Athletix, a multi-sport performance training center where young athletes can train with some of the same professionals who helped found his career in the Eastvale/Corona, California, area. Already the founder of the Marked As Winners Foundation—which offers football camps, cheerleading camps, a celebrity golf tournament, academic scholarships, mental health courses, financial literacy programs, and academic success events for ages 10 and up to the youth of Eastvale/Corona and surrounding communities—Williams is continuing his commitment to giving back to the community he loves.

'20s

Kyra Shimogori

Kyra Shimogori BFA'21 BS'21 is a member of the Corps de Ballet at Ballet Tucson, where she also works as a part-time marketing manager. She also manages the ARBICO Organics "Easy Organic Gardener" podcast, organizing guests, recording audio, and writing summaries and copy. Prior to Ballet Tucson, she was a trainee with Ballet Idaho. At the U, she danced in classical ballets and performed in original works. Shimogori also took on leadership roles in the School of Dance's Character Dance Ensemble.

Gianna Cefalu

Gianna Cefalu BS'21 is the new sports director of WJBF on NewsChannel 6 in Augusta, Georgia, where she covers sports including the Masters, SEC, and ACC. Previously, she was a sports director in Lewiston, Idaho. At the U, she was a sportswriter for *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, a co-host for the K-UTE radio show "All Things Sports," and executive director for a local feature show called "Short Sports."

What's new with U?
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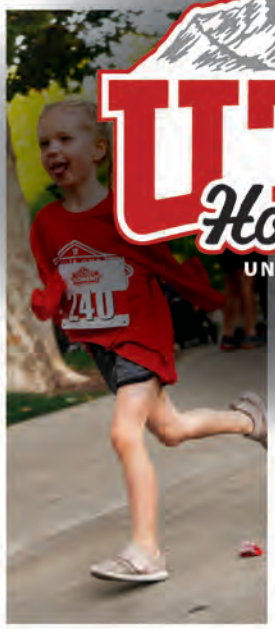
SPOTLIGHT

Talïn Tanielian BA'14 worked on the Oscar-shortlisted animated short *I'm Hip* as a compositor, special effects animator, colorist, color key artist, shot planner, crew organizer, production manager, and editor. A first-generation Armenian American, Tanielian holds an MFA in animation and illustration from California University of the Arts, Long Beach, and has also studied at Gobelins L'École de L'Image in Paris. Her MFA thesis film *Jinja*—a short that she wrote, directed, animated, and illustrated—was accepted to several festivals across the country and worldwide, winning for Best Animated Short at Japan Web Fest. "Travels to Japan had inspired me to deep dive more into Japanese folklore surrounding spirits and religion," she notes. "My film had themes about Shintoism, moving away from home, and embracing our differences."



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Introducing the SWOOP SPRINT, an all-ages fun run and festival to kick off Homecoming Week 2025!

SATURDAY, OCT. 18

Swoop Sprint & Block Party:
- Swoop Sprint 5K
- Kids Sprint 1K
- Dog Dash
- Face Painting
- Games & Inflatables
- Photo Booth
- Caricature artist
- Live DJ
- Appearances by Swoop, the Utah Spirit Team, & Athletics
- Lunch and Desserts

Registration opens July 1!

Sponsorship packages and opportunities available.

SWOOP SPRINT 2025

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22

U Alumni Reunion of 5's
- All graduates of class years that end in "5" join us for a reunion!

THURSDAY, OCT. 23

- Songfest
- Songfest Alumni, Parent & Student Reception

FRIDAY, OCT. 24

- Parent & Family Weekend kicks off

SATURDAY, OCT. 25

- Homecoming Tailgate
- Homecoming Game, Utah vs. Colorado at Rice-Eccles Stadium

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—Marilyn "Dee" Ray, PhD'81

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*Limitations apply. The information presented is not intended as legal or financial advice.

A Summertime Standby

When Red Butte Garden & Arboretum announces the date its Outdoor Concert Series season tickets will go on sale, it's a story in itself. Music lovers mark their calendars and hope they'll be able to click "Purchase" before their favorite artists sell out.

The Garden & Arboretum, celebrating its 40th anniversary, launched the concert series in 1987 with four local groups performing on a small, tented stage at a whopping $3 per ticket. Popularity surged as bigger names like B.B. King and Indigo Girls joined the lineup, paving the way for a new state-of-the-art stage and amphitheater in 2008.

Today, *Salt Lake Magazine* calls the Red Butte Garden Outdoor Concert Series "a mainstay of summer in Salt Lake." For tickets—those not already sold out—visit *redbuttegarden.org/concerts*. Savvy concert-goers know the secret—garden membership grants presale access, giving you first choice before the general public each spring.

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