

In the Year 2023: WSU, World, Culturally

2023 was a landmark year for Weber State University, marked by a massive enrollment record, a change in athletic leadership, and the launch of the city's first all-electric transit line.

A Historic Enrollment Milestone

In the fall of 2023, Weber State officially surpassed 30,000 students (30,536 total) for the first time in its history. [\[source\]](#)

- **Record Graduation:** WSU awarded a record-high 6,775 degrees and certificates during the 2022–23 academic year. [\[source\]](#)
- **Dream Weber Expansion:** WSU partnered with TheDream.US, the nation's largest success program for undocumented students, providing \$1.2 million in scholarships. [\[source\]](#)

The Launch of the OGX

One of the most visible changes in 2023 was the official launch of the Ogden Express (OGX) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line in August.

- **Campus Connectivity:** This all-electric bus line connects the Ogden FrontRunner station through downtown and directly through the heart of the WSU campus to McKay-Dee Hospital. [\[source\]](#)
- **Redefining the "Wildcat Shuttle":** The OGX replaced the old campus shuttles with high-frequency, clean-energy transit that is currently free for students and the community. [\[source\]](#)

A New Era for Athletics

2023 saw major coaching changes for the university's two most prominent programs:

- **Football Coaching Change:** After nine seasons, legendary coach Jay Hill left for BYU. Mickey Mental, who had served as the offensive coordinator, was promoted as the 12th head coach in school history. He led the team to a 6–5 record in his debut year. [\[source\]](#)
- **Women's Basketball:** Jenteal Jackson was named the new head coach for the women's basketball team, tasked with rebuilding the program after a tough previous season. [\[source\]](#)

Campus Development & Technology

- **First White Coat Ceremony:** To celebrate the move from the classroom to clinical rotations, Weber State presented its first 20 physician assistant students with their traditional white coats. This inaugural ceremony officially recognized the debut cohort of the university's PA program. [\[source\]](#)
- **AI Integration:** While many universities were wary of ChatGPT, WSU made headlines in early 2023 for its proactive approach, with faculty like Alex Lawrence incorporating Artificial Intelligence tools directly into the curriculum to prepare students for the future workforce. [\[source\]](#)

Community & Culture

- **"Grandma Great":** 79-year-old student Sharon Barber (known to her 3 million TikTok followers as "Grandma Great") went viral while pursuing her associate's degree at WSU, embodying the university's "I can do hard things" spirit. [\[source\]](#)
- **Pops & Fireworks:** The 44th annual Lindquist Family Symphony Pops Concert and Fireworks returned in July, maintaining its status as one of Utah's largest fireworks displays. [\[source\]](#)

2023: AI and Global Conflict

- **The AI Explosion:** Generative AI tools like ChatGPT reached mainstream dominance, sparking debates about the future of work, education, and creativity.
- **Middle East Conflict:** A major war broke out between Israel and Hamas following the October 7 attacks, leading to a significant humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- **Coronation of King Charles III:** The United Kingdom held its first coronation in 70 years following the death of Queen Elizabeth II in late 2022.

2023: The Year of "Barbenheimer"

- **The "Barbenheimer" Phenomenon:** The simultaneous release of *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* created a massive organic marketing movement, bringing millions of people back to theaters dressed in pink or suits.
- **The Eras Tour:** Taylor Swift's tour became a global economic force, boosting the GDP of cities it visited and becoming the highest-grossing tour of all time.
- **AI Art:** Cultural debates shifted toward the ethics and creativity of AI-generated art, music, and writing as tools like Midjourney and Suno went mainstream.