

WSU NEWS

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY NEWS & EVENTS | DECEMBER 2025

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WELCOMING LESLIE DURHAM AS INTERIM PRESIDENT

One month into her role as interim president, **Leslie Durham** is using her 25 years of higher education experience to help lead Weber State.

During November's university town hall, Durham said her goal is to empower faculty and staff to keep doing the work that makes WSU such a special place.

"I want to move the obstacles, I want to shout about your successes," Durham said. "I want everyone to understand what an incredible place Weber State is."

Durham described her interim leadership philosophy as working to "keep the great things going" by supporting existing initiatives and growing new ones that help every student succeed.

"One of the ways we can show our love and admiration for the people who've done great work here over many years is to help sustain the programs they have loved, stewarded, and cared about," she said. "That's what I want us to do together."

Once the Utah Board of Higher Education selects WSU's new president, which typically takes several months, Durham plans to return to her position as provost and vice president of Academic Affairs.

"Our values are going to keep propelling us forward," Durham said. "And I know we have an incredibly bright future here."

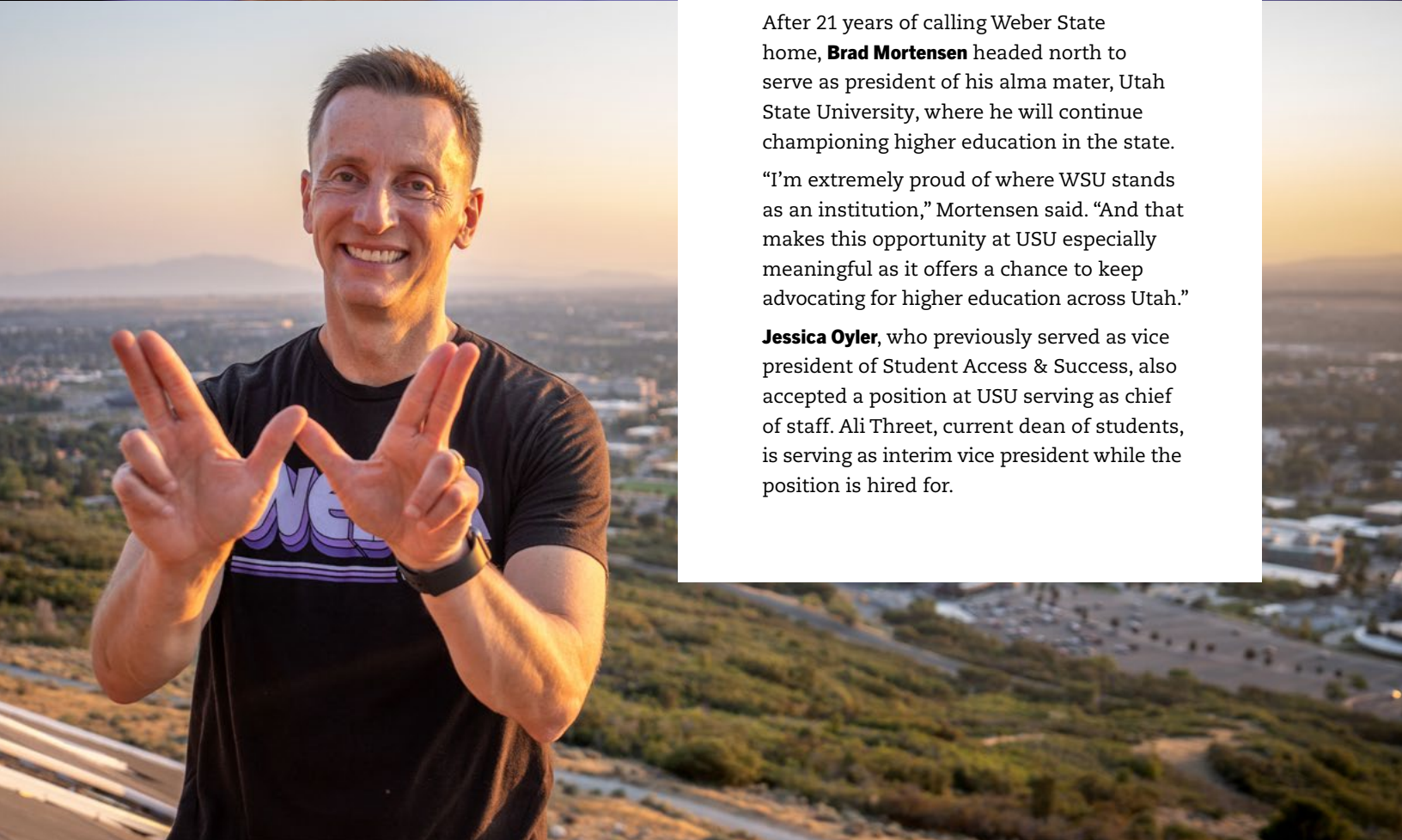


BRAD MORTENSEN SAYS GOODBYE

After 21 years of calling Weber State home, **Brad Mortensen** headed north to serve as president of his alma mater, Utah State University, where he will continue championing higher education in the state.

"I'm extremely proud of where WSU stands as an institution," Mortensen said. "And that makes this opportunity at USU especially meaningful as it offers a chance to keep advocating for higher education across Utah."

Jessica Oyler, who previously served as vice president of Student Access & Success, also accepted a position at USU serving as chief of staff. Ali Threet, current dean of students, is serving as interim vice president while the position is hired for.



A NEW CAMPUS POWER SOURCE IS HERE

Four batteries, each about the size of a semi-truck, have been placed just east of Stewart Stadium near WSU's existing electrical substation.

This new system will help power the Ogden campus.

The batteries' primary purpose is providing day-to-day power, so the campus can use battery energy during peak demand times or seasons when power is most expensive. This strategy of reducing consumption during high-use hours is called peak shaving.

In the future, the batteries can also provide backup power during outages, which could eventually remove the need for about 30 diesel generators.

"This is a cutting-edge project, and Weber State is an early adopter of this technology," said **Jacob Cain**, associate vice president for Facilities and Campus Planning. "Right now, we mostly see this used in industry, but we're one of the first in the academic world to use it."



Not only will the batteries reduce energy costs and bring WSU closer to its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2040, it also makes campus more resilient. Cain said the Ogden campus could run on the batteries alone for two or three hours, if needed: "These are fast-acting systems — you could lose power in your office and you won't even know it."

The batteries will soon be connected to the campus' electrical grid for several weeks of testing.

MORE WILDCATS THAN EVER CROSS THE FINISH LINE

Weber State awarded more than 7,550 credentials during the 2024–25 academic year, an all-time high for the university.

WSU is also serving a record number of students with a headcount of 33,293 this fall. University leadership credits creative initiatives like Direct Admissions and differential tuition for bachelor and associate's degrees as contributors to the uptick in enrollment.

The university's 600+ full-time faculty are also a primary factor of enrollment and completion rates, making sure students have what they need to achieve their goals.

"Our faculty are Weber State's top strength," said Interim President **Leslie Durham**. "Not only the time they invest in each student, but the talents and expertise they bring to



fields that have positive impacts in Utah and our region. They continually find ways to engage our students and prepare them to make powerful contributions to their workplaces and communities."

CODE PURPLE: KNOW YOUR EMERGENCY TERMS

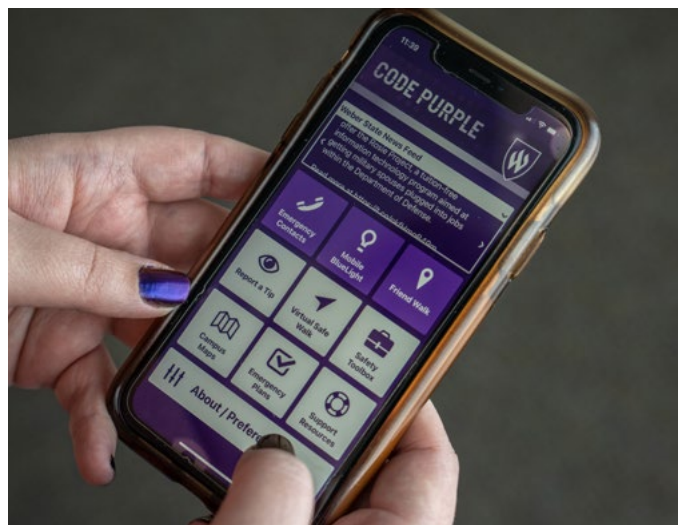
In the event of a campus emergency, do you know what to do? Now's a good time to review some of the common terms that may be sent through Code Purple, the university's emergency notification system. In some cases, you may be instructed to either lockdown or shelter in place. Here's what that means:

Lockdown:

If a hostile or armed intruder is on campus, you'll be directed through Code Purple to lock down. This means you should secure and barricade doors and windows. Once barricaded, remain silent and wait for further instruction.

Shelter in place:

If there are severe weather conditions or a hazardous material spill, you might be advised to shelter in place. This means you should stay in a safe place indoors to avoid dangerous conditions outside. In the event of a hazardous material spill, you may be directed to turn off ventilation systems or seal off areas where outside air could get into the room.



Additionally, in some scenarios, you may be instructed to **protect yourself**. For example, in the case of an active shooter, you may need to run, hide, or fight. Note: these instructions are not in any particular order. Your action will depend on your circumstances and how close you are to the situation.

- **RUN** from the immediate danger, only if it's safe to do so.
- **HIDE** and barricade yourself in a secure area.
- **FIGHT** if you're confronted by an armed aggressor.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

20 **HONOR ROLL** 25
Princeton Review

For the second year in a row, WSU has made Princeton Review's [Mental Health Services Honor Roll](#), a designation given to 30 institutions for exceptional dedication to students' health and well-being.

WSU was recognized for ensuring all students have access to a variety of mental health services and resources.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR DATA, ANALYTICS USE ON CAMPUS

WSU's Data Literacy program was recognized in the 2025 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, which features trends and technologies that are reshaping the higher education landscape.

EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association for college and university professionals, sought thousands of submissions to find the most innovative or thoughtful examples of data use. Only 11% of entries were accepted.

The report highlighted WSU's campus-wide efforts to train faculty and staff on making data-informed decisions. Read the [whole publication](#) to learn more about how WSU uses data to drive student success.

THANKS FOR BEING great, Great, GREAT

Human Resources and the President's Office collaborated with departments across campus for Employee Appreciation Day, a carnival-themed event that celebrates those who make WSU the great place it is.

More than 1,200 Wildcats headed to Stewart Stadium for lunch, dessert, and games.



HAPPY HOMECOMING

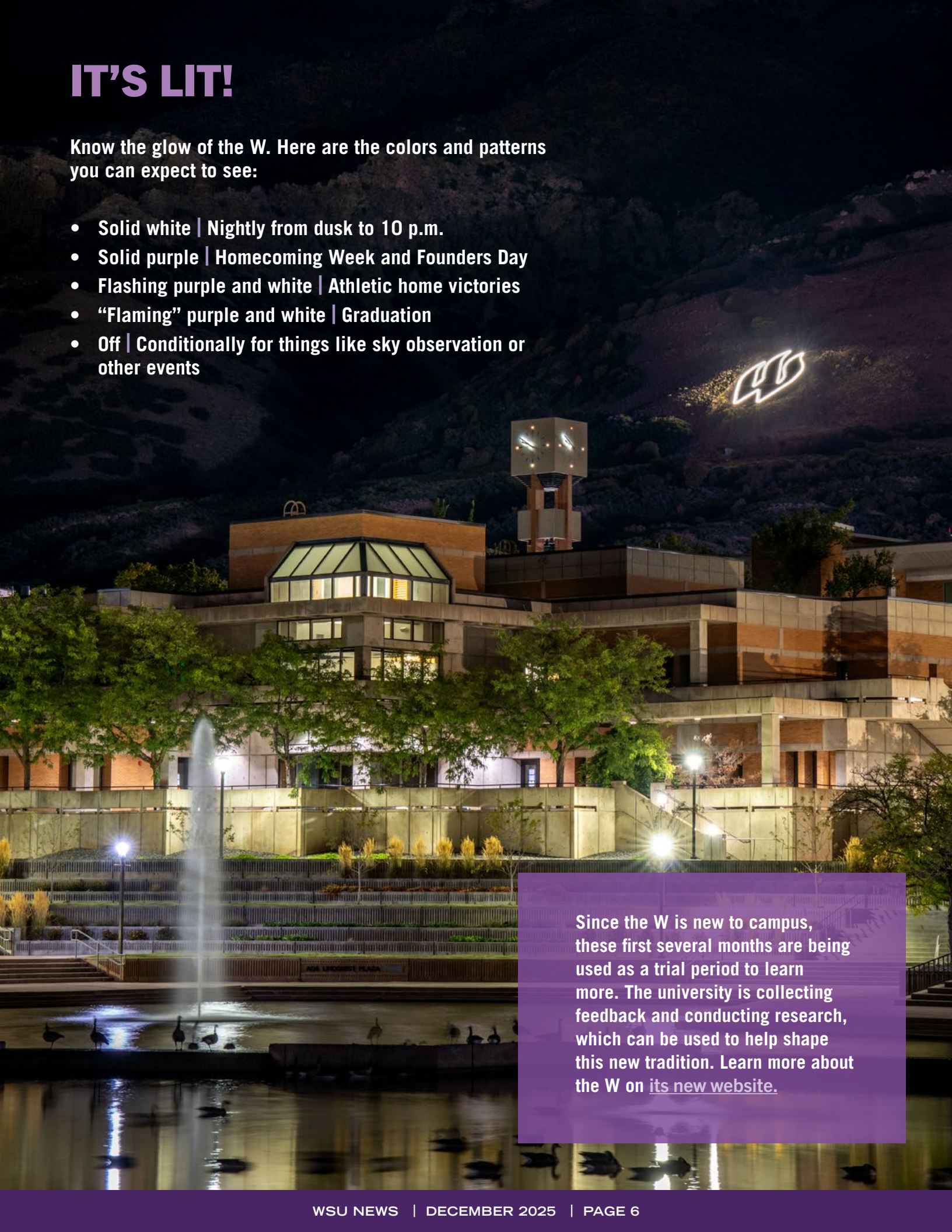
Rain or shine, Wildcats showed up to cheer each other on. In addition to the football game, other homecoming activities included Oktoberfest, Purple Paw Parade, Homecoming Pep Rally, and Illuminight.



IT'S LIT!

Know the glow of the W. Here are the colors and patterns you can expect to see:

- Solid white | Nightly from dusk to 10 p.m.
- Solid purple | Homecoming Week and Founders Day
- Flashing purple and white | Athletic home victories
- “Flaming” purple and white | Graduation
- Off | Conditionally for things like sky observation or other events



Since the W is new to campus, these first several months are being used as a trial period to learn more. The university is collecting feedback and conducting research, which can be used to help shape this new tradition. Learn more about the W on [its new website](#).



BACK OPEN, AND BETTER THAN EVER

After a multi-year renovation completely transformed the David O. McKay Education Building, it re-opened its doors for students this semester.

Originally built in 1972, the building was stripped to its frame and foundation, and rebuilt to include more natural light, modern classrooms and study spaces, and roof-mounted solar panels.

It has 13 classrooms, including a lecture hall that can seat up to 90 students, a Digital Media Production Lab and a maker space called the Fabrication Lab, which will equip students and faculty with the necessary tools and resources to create innovative materials for their lessons and classes.

In addition to housing WSU's teacher education and child and family studies programs, the building is home to the Melba S. Lehner Children's School and Charter Academy, which both serve as a teaching school for young children and training lab for college students. Upgrades to the Children's School include additional security measures and an expansive playscape on the north and east side of the building that can be used as an outdoor classroom.

"The McKay Education Building is more than a state-of-the-art facility," said **Julie Rich**, dean of the College of Social Sciences & Education. "It represents our deep commitment to preparing the next generation of teachers and leaders."

Watch students [see their new space](#) for the first time.



AWARDING FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS IN THEATER ARTS, ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Weber State University honored top faculty this fall, naming the new recipients of the John S. Hinckley Fellow Award and the Exemplary Interdisciplinary Collaboration Award.



John S. Hinckley Fellow Award

Jessica Greenberg, theatre professor and chair of the School of Performing Arts, has been widely praised for her student-centered and dynamic teaching style, combining professional rigor with mentorship that extends

beyond graduation. Her guidance has helped students thrive in professional theater careers and earn national recognition, including at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

"I am so honored to be recognized by my community here," Greenberg said. "I am privileged to serve alongside some of the most dedicated educators and artists I've ever met. I'm genuinely proud to serve at an institution that has been nationally recognized for our successes in affordability, access, and upward mobility for our students."



Exemplary Interdisciplinary Collaboration Award

Led by **An Ho**, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, the Weber Industrial Training & Assessment Center was recognized for its work connecting

students with industry partners in order to help reduce energy use for Utah businesses.

"The success of the Weber State Industrial Assessment Center comes from strong collaboration among students, faculty, industry partners, and community organizations," Ho said. "Together, we help local manufacturers and cities improve their energy efficiency, reduce costs, and give students hands-on experience that directly prepares them for their future careers."

WSU TRUSTEES WELCOME TOP BUSINESS LEADERS

Keith Titus, president and CEO of MarketStar, was recently elected as chair of the Board of Trustees. The WSU alum was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 2021 and had previously served as vice chair since 2023. Titus succeeds Karla Bergeson, who had led the board since August 2023.

Titus said he's confident WSU will stay focused on helping every student thrive "by supporting the university's passionate faculty and staff as they deliver transformative learning experiences that uplift lives and communities."

Weber State alum Lori Belnap Pehrson, an accomplished aerospace executive and trusted board member of multiple nonprofit organizations, was elected as the board's vice chair.

Two new members also joined the board: Ally Isom, chief marketing and external affairs officer for Clyde Companies;



and Brad Wilson, WSU alum and former Speaker of the Utah House of Representatives.

Together, the board's primary roles include establishing policies, making strategic decisions for the university, and overseeing the organization's activity.



WSU'S CSI PROGRAM SUPPORTS STATE INVESTIGATION

The crime scene investigation program recently helped the Utah State Fire Marshal's Office with a high-profile arson case.

WSU's CSI lab has a system called the "Recover Latent Fingerprint Technology," which can lift usable fingerprints from surfaces that are typically very challenging. It's the only one of its kind in Utah, which prompted state investigators to ask the university for assistance earlier this year.

"This machine is excellent for developing latent fingerprints on metal surfaces, even after they've been exposed to fire or water," said **Mitch Pilkington**, CSI program director.

Pilkington and his colleagues arranged training and instruction from the machine's manufacturing representatives. Then, state investigators worked in WSU's lab to process the evidence.

The investigation is ongoing, and detectives can use this evidence as they continue working on the case.

"This was a fantastic chance to strengthen our relationships with our law enforcement partners," Pilkington said.

The CSI program is exploring future partnership possibilities. Pilkington said other agencies have reached out with interest in how the system could help them solve cases.

SUPPORTING BUDDING BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

A record number of high school students from 13 different schools throughout Utah participated in the fourth annual WeberBiz Case Competition, hosted by the John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics.

Participants competed for cash and scholarships, working in teams of three to develop and present solutions to real-world business problems.



FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Abdulmalek Al-Gahmi, computer science associate professor, presented “Identifying Struggling Students Using LMS Data” at the 2025 American Society of Engineering Education conference in Montreal, Canada.

Rachel Bachman, mathematics professor, mentored Propel Scholars Keyan Staples and Jenna Ussing as they presented “Teaching Residency Gradual Release: Lessons Learned” at the 2025 Noyce Summit.

Kellie Bornhoft, art assistant professor, has a solo exhibition titled “Touchstone” running at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art until Jan. 3, 2026.

Randy Boyle, management information systems professor, presented “Predicting the Impacts of AI & Robotics” at an industrial conference in Warsaw, Poland. He also presented “AI and Workforce Retraining” at the Utah Association of Public Treasurers and “Robotics and Automation” at the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Caitlin Campbell, nursing instructor, co-authored “A cross-sectional study exploring nurse burnout and satisfaction with the electronic health record” in *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*.

Jean-Louise England, theatre program costume shop manager; **Steve Stones**, visual arts adjunct instructor; **René Venegas**, visual arts adjunct instructor; and **Angelika Pagel**, retired art professor, each earned a 2025 Mayor’s Awards in the Arts, which honors people and organizations making a difference in the Ogden community through arts.

Nicole Flink, professional sales department chair, published and co-authored “The Power of Words: Analyzing Sales Role-Playing Performance Using LIWC Linguistic Insights” in the *Journal of Marketing Education*.

Dave Folsom, associate professor of accounting, had two papers accepted for publication: “Executive-Level internal Governance and Tax Planning” in the *Journal of Contemporary Accounting and Economics* and “How Does Managerial Entrenchment Relate to Financial Statement Comparability” in *Advances in Accounting*.

Robert Fudge, philosophy professor, presented “Dignity and Disability” at Western Michigan University’s national Medical Humanities Conference.

Saori Hanaki, exercise and sport science associate professor and program director, and **Sachini Kodi**, exercise and sport science assistant professor, co-authored “Does Work Posture Affect Static Postural Stability?” in the *International Journal of Ergonomics*.

An Ho, mechanical engineering associate professor, received the 2025 Exemplary Interdisciplinary Collaboration Award for his work in establishing The Weber Industrial Training and Assessment Center.

Stephanie Kimmey, art history assistant professor, co-authored the article “Nemea” published in the *Oxford Bibliographies: Classics*.

Branden Little, history professor, and **Lorrie Rands**, Special Collections & University Archives oral history processor, presented on the “Utah’s WWII Narratives” panel at the Utah Historical Society Perspectives Speaker Series.

Susan Matt, history professor, delivered the keynote address “Self-Reliance and Loneliness in the Age of AI” at the Society for the History of Emotions Conference at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Alyssa Mock, electrical and computer engineering associate professor, received the 2025 RISE Outstanding Researcher Award for her exceptional contributions to research and the lasting impact of her work on the university and the wider community.

Cory Moss, health administrative services professor, presented “Strengthening Student Capstone and Industry Partnerships Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Classroom Innovation” at the Association of University Programs in Health Administration.

Blake Nielson, professional sales professor, and **Nicole Flink**, professional sales department chair, published “Early exposure to sales careers: An exploratory study of junior high student perceptions of sales and willingness to consider a sales career” in the *Journal of Marketing Education*.

Carrie Ota, child and family studies professor, co-authored “Sustained Attention in Three-Year-Old Children: The Impact of Teaching Conditions and Choice” in the *Early Childhood Education Journal*.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONT.)



Gennie Parkman, zoology assistant professor, published and co-corresponding authored “The Roles of PTEN in Melanoma Suppression” in *Pigment Cell & Melanoma Research*. She also co-authored “Combined inhibition of focal adhesion kinase and RAF/MEK elicits synergistic inhibition of melanoma growth and reduces metastases” in *Cell Reports Medicine*.

Nicolas Pérez-Consuegra, earth and environmental sciences assistant professor, presented “La relación entre la erosión y el levantamiento de las rocas en los Andes del norte” and participated in a panel discussion at the Symposium of the Geology of Colombia in Bogota, Colombia.

Richard Price, political science professor, published “The straight college strikes back: 1990s backlash against inclusive campuses” in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.

Lorrie Rands, Special Collections & University Archives oral history processor, and **Marina Kenner**, digital initiatives processor, presented “Metadata in a shifting landscape: Navigating complexity in oral history metadata in a politically charged era” at the Oral History Association annual conference.

Sandeep Kumar Rangaraju, economics associate professor, has two new publications: “The Time-Varying Effects of Oil News on Inflation” in *Energy Economics* and “The macroeconomic effects of oil shocks in the oil and non-oil producing states” in *The Energy Journal*.

Matthew Romaniello, history professor and department chair, published “Europe’s Laboratory: Climate and Health in Eighteenth-Century Russia” in *Cornell University Press*.

Heather Root, botany and plant ecology professor, co-authored “Vegetarian and soil data in the Canyonlands Research Center and adjoining arid, semiarid, and montane rangelands of San Juan County, Utah, USA” in the U.S. Geological Survey data release.

Melinda Russell-Stamp, psychology associate professor, co-authored “Avatars vs. actors: Comparison shows difference in role-play simulations for Psychology students” in the *International Journal Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*.

Serdar Sezen, mechanical engineering assistant professor; **Christian Hearn**, electrical and computer engineering professor; and **Justin Knighton**, manufacturing engineering

technology assistant professor, secured and executed the College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology’s first-ever Phase 2 STTR grant, a highly significant \$142,287 award from the U.S. Air Force in collaboration with Havenlock Inc.

Oliver Snow, WSU Online executive director, co-presented “Navigating the AGI Frontier: How Artificial General Intelligence Will Transform Instructional Design” at the Online Learning Consortium 2025 Accelerate conference. He also graduated from the University of Wyoming with a Ph.D. in Learning, Design, and Technology after a successful defense of his graduate research titled, “Is GenAI the new CliffsNotes? A Mixed Methods Study on Technology Readiness and the Lived Experiences of Introductory English Students in a Policy-Driven AI Culture.”

Joshua Sponbeck, athletic training instructor, co-authored “Validity of MRI and Ultrasound Volume Measurements of Foot Muscles and Plantar Fascia Cross-Sectional Area Within Older Adults With and Without Chronic Plantar Fasciitis” in the *Journal of Foot and Ankle Research*.

Brandon Stevenson, automotive technology assistant professor, presented “Mastering Connector Testing & Signal Acquisition” and was a panel member for the “Industry to Instruction: Strengthening the Educator Pipeline” at the California Automotive Technical Education Alliance Conference.

Deborah Uman, dean of the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities, was elected to a three-year term on the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences Board of Directors.

Weiwei Wang, accounting associate professor, published “Stylized Social Security Reforms with Labor Market Frictions – Lifecycle Analysis of Tax Uncertainty” in *Science Direct*.

Stephanie Wolfe, political science professor, accompanied three WSU students to present “Memorialization and Symbolic Reparations: Post-Genocide Memory and Justice in Rwanda” at the International Association of Genocide Scholars in Johannesburg, South Africa.

WELCOME TO WEBER

FOR THE FIRST TIME OR IN A NEW ROLE

Jocynlen Ashton

AVP Student Pathways

Allison Badham

College of Social Science

Jodi Belnap

College of Social Science

Kristie Binks

AVP Student Pathways

Lucy Brown

College of Social Science

Ashlee Ellinwood

Marketing and
Communications

Kaylie Glissmeyer

Sports Facilities
Management

Scott Hadzik

School of Computing

Kristy Harmon

Academic Technology
Services

Alyssa Higham

Sustainability Practices
Research

Eliza Hill

Radiologic Sciences

Bryan Kawamura

Facilities Management

Kaitlyn Kirk

Nursing

Quincy Linsley

Communication

Elisha Lynch

CSSE Education

Norma Magana Luna

CSSE Education

Carson McFarland

Performing Arts

Ashlie McIntire

Library

Abigail Monsen

Honors Program

Niharica Myla

Infrastructure Services

Juliana Oldham

LIBR Learning & Student
Support

Chris Olsen

Facilities Management

Angelique Pifer

Office of the Registrar

Brant Rice

Facilities Management

McKenzie Roers

Student Support &
Resource Center

Kailee Sendle

Sustainability Practices
Research

Joshua Taylor

Sustainability Practices
Research

Christina Wilson

Assistant VP for Access

RETIRED

HERE'S TO YOU!

Tricia Burton

Telecommunication
Services

John Kowalewski

Marketing and
Communications

Claire Hughes

LIBR Learning &
Student Support

Ann Millner

College of Health
Professions

Steven Nabor

President's Office

Rebecca Thompson

VP University
Advancement

QUOTABLES

Now more than ever, it's important for students to feel supported, embraced, and appreciated in terms of the contributions they bring to the community.

— **MÓNICA RODRIGUEZ**, student engagement program manager for the Student Success Center

It's important to note the history we have in common and our shared ideas, especially in a world trying to drive us apart.

— **LEAH MURRAY**, director of the Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service

Industry talks, Weber listens.

— **SHANE FARVER**, director of special projects, marketing, and communications at WSU's Division of Online & Continuing Education

CREDITS

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