

Dean Al Smith Named Interim USU President by Utah Board of Higher Education

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USU Interim President Al Smith

On February 12, the Utah Board of Higher Education named Alan L. Smith as interim president of Utah State University. Smith has served as dean of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services since July 2021 and was honored as the first inaugural Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Dean in June 2024.

“On behalf of the Utah State Board of Trustees, we are grateful to Dean Smith for his willingness to serve as our interim president,” said Jacey Skinner, chair of the USU Board of Trustees. “Dean’s Smith steady leadership style and ability to work with stakeholders will be essential to maintaining USU’s momentum. We have every confidence that Al Smith is the right leader to guide USU through this pivotal transition.”

A first-generation college graduate, Smith joined Utah State after nine years as professor and chairperson in the Department of Kinesiology at Michigan State University. He has more than 24 years of experience in academia, holding professorship positions at Purdue University from 1998-2012 and getting his start in 1997 at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. He has also held visiting professorships in Finland and the United Kingdom.

“I am honored to be entrusted by the board with the responsibility of leading Utah’s land-grant institution, a true gem that profoundly transforms the lives of individuals, families, and communities across the state,” Smith said. “I am committed to honoring this legacy while sustaining our

momentum and advancing the ongoing efforts of our staff, faculty, administrators, and board of trustees to meet the challenges of today and the future.”

Under Smith’s leadership, the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services has made noteworthy strides, including securing state support to create the Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia Research Center, expanding the footprint of USU’s nursing program by doubling its student capacity and creating the new Emma Eccles Jones Advanced Nursing Education Suite, and bringing in over \$46M in external funding expenditures last year.

Smith has a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Rochester, a master’s degree in exercise and sport science from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a doctorate in exercise and movement science from the University of Oregon.

The Utah Board of Higher Education also announced they will begin a comprehensive search to fill USU’s top spot and will offer additional details in the weeks to come.