



USU Board of Trustees Strategy Meeting

Friday, December 5, 2025, 11:00 AM – 1:40 PM MST

NEHMA/Wanlass Conference Room, Logan Campus and via Zoom

Meeting Details: <https://usu.zoom.us/j/89410780062?pwd=N6>

Attendance

Trustees:

Tessa White, Chair
Gina Gagon, Vice Chair
Ryan Dent
Brett Hugie

David Huntsman
Luke Johnson
Dave Petersen (virtual)
Jacey Skinner

Brandon Sorensen
Clark Whitworth
Kacie Malouf (absent)

University Representatives Present:

Paul Barr (virtual)
Lisa Berreau (virtual)
Janalyn Brown
Steve Campbell
Dave Cowley (virtual)
Haley Klaassen
Katie Lee-Koven
Mica McKinney
Brad Mortensen, President

Burke Nazer
John O'Neil (virtual)
Kristian Olsen (virtual)
Jessica Oyler
Bill Plate (virtual)
Jordan Rampersad
Larry Smith (virtual)
Brian Stead (virtual)
Danielle Stewart

MaKenzie Stock
Cam Walker (virtual)
Courtney White (virtual)
Ken White (virtual)
Matt White (virtual)
Kris Winter (virtual)
Devin Wiser (virtual)

Agenda

1. Call to Order

11:03 AM

Presenter: Chair Tessa White

Chair White welcomed everyone and introduced Katie Lee-Koven, who provided a welcome to the space.

2. Welcome and Information: NEHMA Art Education and Research

11:04 AM

Presenter: Dr. Danielle Stewart

Dr. Stewart provided additional information about the new research center and the artwork selected for the occasion.

3. Action Agenda

3.1. Approve: Expedited Faculty Tenure

11:11 AM

Presenter: Provost Larry Smith

Provost Larry Smith reviewed the tenure process and presented the names of those being considered for expedited tenure.

- 3.1.1. Sasha Reed**
- 3.1.2. Jennifer Keshwani**
- 3.1.3. Deepak Keshwani**
- 3.1.4. Bettina Willie**

Motion:

Trustee Ryan Dent, pursuant to USU Policy 4004, moved that the Utah State University Board of Trustees approve the expedited faculty tenure recommendations for the following individuals: Sasha Reed, Jennifer Keshwani, Deepak Keshwani, and Bettina Willie. Vice Chair Gina Gagon seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in the affirmative. Motion passed.

4. Trustee Committee Discussion re: goals and charters

Trustees shared with President Mortensen and the full board an overview of their respective committee work. Chair White asked each committee chair to address three questions:

1. What are the main areas of oversight for the committee?
2. Where is most of the time spent, and what key themes or priorities emerge?
3. Are there recommended shifts or areas not currently addressed that would be beneficial?

Chair White began the discussion with the Executive Committee. Summaries of each committee discussion follow.

4.1. Executive

11:30 AM

Presenter: Chair Tessa White

The committee emphasized the importance of ensuring all matters are reviewed by subcommittees before reaching the full board. Priorities include maintaining a list of key issues, advancing initiatives, dedicating time to audits, and addressing risks to the university.

Discussion focused on the need for a master list outlining processes for items moving through trustee channels. Members suggested streamlining procedures to complement existing structures. It was noted all agenda items have gone through a subcommittee.

4.2. Audit, Risk & Compliance (ARC)

11:41 AM

Presenter: Trustee Ryan Dent

The committee discussed its broad scope, which includes financial elements related to audits, risk management, and compliance. Members emphasized focusing efforts strategically rather than reacting to routine issues, with significant time dedicated to audits and risk oversight. University compliance is currently decentralized, and improved coordination and communication protocols were noted as priorities.

Trustees suggested an annual full-board discussion on ARC matters to ensure alignment and avoid siloed information. The conversation highlighted that risk is not inherently negative; the goal is to manage necessary risks to meet state expectations. Audit, risk, and compliance were acknowledged as distinct areas, and risk management considerations apply across all committees.

4.3. Research & Academic Approval (TRAAC)

11:56 AM

Presenter: Vice Chair Gina Gagon

The committee discussed developing a more strategic approach to program planning and research. Trustees expressed interest in being involved earlier in new program development, as current processes vary by department. The group emphasized USU's goal of strengthening its position as an R1 research institution and suggested examining AAU benchmarks.

Additional discussion focused on leveraging partnerships, including opportunities with the University of Utah, improving communication about USU's extensive research portfolio, and aligning efforts with state needs. Trustees noted ongoing work at the state level to provide earlier visibility into program proposals for timely input.

4.4. Student Success

12:11 PM

Presenter: Trustee David Huntsman

The committee is focused on defining what student success means and determining appropriate metrics and outcomes. Key priorities include aligning with the president's vision, USHE performance measures, and developing a strategic charter. Trustees emphasized moving beyond enrollment to a broader view of success that includes student wellness, educational quality, and the value of the overall experience.

The discussion highlighted opportunities to adopt proven national models, allocate resources effectively, and articulate the return on higher education investment. Trustees expressed interest in a future full-board discussion on student success as a core priority.

4.5. Statewide Mission & Campus Oversight

12:27 PM

Presenter: Vice Chair Gina Gagon

The committee reviewed its charter and emphasized the need for strong coordination and communication between statewide efforts and the larger board. USU's statewide campuses are organized into regions, with trustees assigned to each region. Because the committee's work spans multiple areas, there is natural overlap with other committees, reinforcing the importance of alignment on statewide priorities.

4.6. Athletics

12:35 PM

Presenter: Trustee Clark Whitworth

The committee's mission is to support university leadership in enhancing student experience through athletics. Key priorities include defining the role and vision for athletics, engaging students such as through the Hurd organization, and exploring fundraising opportunities. Trustees noted the impact of recent changes in Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies and emphasized the importance of maintaining a broad, inclusive approach to athletics strategy.

4.7. Strategic Partnerships & Fundraising

12:47 PM

Presenter: Trustee Jacey Skinner

The committee focuses on strengthening USU's presence and impact across the state by coordinating trustee involvement in events and ensuring alignment with university and

foundation board activities. Key priorities include synthesizing USU's contributions to communities, sharing reports on economic impact, and supporting efforts in five areas: community engagement, industry partnerships, government relations, alumni and donor relations, and fundraising. Trustees emphasized collaboration rather than duplication and leveraging untapped champions to amplify USU's reach.

4.8. Honorary Degrees, Awards & Recognition

12:58 PM

Presenter: Trustee David Petersen

The committee is responsible for reviewing and recommending nominees for honorary degrees and commencement speakers. Nominations are open to the public, and the committee will present recommendations in January. Most of the committee's work involves careful discussion and evaluation of nominees to ensure thoughtful selections.

5. Working Together and Operating Principles

1:10 PM

Presenter: President Brad Mortensen

President Mortensen provided updates on his upcoming inauguration and statewide tour, emphasizing his commitment to engagement and connection across the institution. He shared positive student feedback and acknowledged challenges faced by faculty and staff, noting efforts to strengthen engagement and support.

The president discussed HB 265 revisions, indicating that final approval may depend on audit results expected soon. He expressed a desire to work closely with trustees, maintain the benefits of institutional boards, and improve communication. Trustees and the president discussed ways to align on high-level objectives, enhance collaboration, and articulate USU's impact across Utah. President Mortensen noted strong support from state leaders and highlighted the significance of being an alumnus, which has raised expectations for his leadership.

6. Closed Session

1:37 PM

Motion for Closed Session:

Vice Chair Gina Gagon moved that in accordance with section 52-4-205 of the Utah Code that the Trustees go into a closed meeting for the sole purpose of discussing the character, professional competence, physical or mental health of individuals, pending or reasonably imminent litigation, and the possible sale of real property. Motion seconded by Trustee David Huntsman. Roll call vote was initiated by Chair Tessa White and taken by Secretary Janalyn Brown. Voting was unanimous in the affirmative and the meeting moved to a closed session which commenced at 1:37pm.

Attendance

Trustees:

Tessa White, Chair

David Huntsman

Brandon Sorensen

Gina Gagon, Vice Chair

Luke Johnson

Clark Whitworth

Ryan Dent

Dave Petersen (virtual)

Kacie Malouf (absent)

Brett Hugie

Jacey Skinner

University Representatives Present:

Janalyn Brown

Brad Mortensen

Jessica Oyler

Mica McKinney

Burke Nazer

Motion to adjourn Closed Session:

Trustees made a motion to adjourn the closed session which was seconded by Trustee Luke Johnson. Voting was unanimous and the closed session concluded at 2:01pm.

7. Adjourn

2:05 PM

Motion:

Trustee David Huntsman moved to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Brandon Sorensen seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned.

Tessa White, Chair

Janalyn Brown, Secretary

Date Approved