

Trustees Present: Darin Bird, Marilee Eyre, Justin Harding, Sydney Nakken, Eric Schmutz, Jamie Shaw, and Caytee Wankier

Trustees Excused: Derral Eves and Beverly Burgess

Others Present: Mindy Benson, Shauna Mendini, Mary Pearson, Stuart Jones, Jared Tippetts, Tiger Funk, Dialea Adams, Vic Hockett, Keegan Dickinson, Tessa Anderson, Pam Powell, Mary Jo Anderson, Matt Zufelt, Lucia Maloy, Karen Peterson, Bill Heyborne, Adam Wilcock, Ashleigh Zimmerman, Chris Cox and Mike Mower

Online Attendees: Prosenjit Chatterjee, Michelle Anderson, Jake Johnson, Robbie Paul, Jenn Burton, Camaree Staheli, Katya Konkle, Courtney Wessling, Wyatt Robison, Sherri Root, Jean Boreen, Mitch Clarke, Aimee Uchman, Nate Esplin, Sylvia Bradshaw, Elliani Decker, Jeremiah Smith

Welcome and Call to Order by Chair Eric Schmutz

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM

Chair Schmutz introduced several individuals in attendance:

- Karen Peterson will serve in Government Relations and Industry Partnerships. She previously worked with the last two governors and is an SUU alumna, having earned her master's degree from Southern Utah University.
- Vic Hockett joined the meeting from the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) Office, where he serves as Associate Commissioner for Talent Ready Utah.
- Keegan Dickinson, the new Executive Vice President of the Student Association, attended in place of Trustee Kenzie Porter. He is from Fresno, California, and is majoring in Business Management.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes - April 23, 2026 [Tab A](#)

A motion to approve the minutes of April 23, 2026, was made by Trustee Marilee Eyre, seconded by Trustee Justin Harding. The motion passed unanimously.

R401-New Academic Certificate-Undergraduate Certificate in Biotechnology [Tab B](#)

Provost Mendini and Dean Heyborne presented R401, a proposal for a new Undergraduate Certificate in Biotechnology within the Department of Biology, with a planned launch in Fall 2026. The 35-36 credit certificate may be completed as a standalone credential or alongside a degree program. It emphasizes hands-on laboratory training, providing students with experience in techniques such as

PCR, gene editing, next-generation sequencing, programming, and bioinformatics. The program will be offered in person to ensure students develop proficiency in essential laboratory skills.

Provost Mendini and Dean Heyborne noted that the certificate was developed in response to significant industry demand. Utah ranks among the top states in the nation for its life sciences workforce, creating a strong need for graduates with biotechnology training.

Trustee Darin Bird moved to approve R401, New Academic Certificate: Undergraduate Certificate in Biotechnology. Trustee Sydney Nakken seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

R401-New Academic Certificate-Undergraduate Certificate in Science Informatics [Tab C](#)

Provost Mendini and Dean Heyborne presented a proposal from the Department of Chemistry and Physics to establish a new Undergraduate Certificate in Science Informatics, with implementation planned for Fall 2026. The 10–15 credit certificate may be completed as a standalone credential or in conjunction with a STEM degree. The program is designed to develop students' data analysis and programming skills through the use of tools such as Python, R, and SQL. Students will learn to create reproducible data workflows and complete a mentored capstone project applying informatics to scientific challenges.

Trustee Darin Bird moved to approve R401 – New Academic Certificate: Undergraduate Certificate in Science Informatics. The motion was seconded by Trustee Jamie Shaw and passed unanimously.

Policy 6.1 Faculty Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure [Tab D](#)

Provost Mendini shared a revision to SUU Policy 6.1 on Faculty Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure. The change clarifies that accomplishments achieved during the year a promotion or tenure application is under review may also be counted toward the faculty member's next major review, resolving previous uncertainty about whether those contributions could be included. Thanks to Jake Johnson and Lucia Maloy in the legal office for the constant review for accuracy and improving definitions as needed. How to count for years of service toward the next rank advancement.

A motion to approve Policy 6.1 Faculty Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure as presented was made by Trustee Justin Harding, seconded by Trustee Jamie Shaw. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy 6.2 Academic Officers [Tab E](#)

Provost Mendini presented revisions to SUU Policy 6.2, Academic Officers. The updates recognize a broader range of academic officer positions, including Assistant Provosts, Associate and Assistant Vice Presidents, the Director of the Library, and Graduate Program Directors. The revisions also align academic officer evaluation procedures with current practice, clarify the faculty status and

reassigned time associated with Associate Dean appointments, and formally include Graduate Program Directors in the policy.

Provost Mendini noted that each college now has an Associate Dean and explained that the role is intended to provide leadership development opportunities while supporting a pathway back to faculty or into additional leadership positions, as desired. He added that the revisions primarily clarify and modernize existing policy language. The policy also maintains the expectation that Executive Deans teach at least one course each year to remain connected to students and the academic mission.

Trustee Jamie Shaw moved to approve Policy 6.2, Academic Officers. The motion was seconded by Trustee Marilee Eyre and passed unanimously.

Policy 6.14 Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct [Tab F](#)

Provost Mendini presented revisions to SUU Policy 6.14, Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct. The revisions align the policy with federal regulations that took effect on January 1, 2026. Updates include the addition of new definitions, enhanced recordkeeping requirements, and clarification of the Research Integrity Officer's authority to conduct inquiries. Provost Mendini explained that the revisions were made primarily to incorporate changes in federal guidelines into the University's policy.

Trustee Justin Harding moved to approve Policy 6.14, Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct, as presented. The motion was seconded by Trustee Sydney Nakken and passed unanimously.

Policy 6.27 Faculty Workload [Tab G](#)

Provost Mendini presented revisions to SUU Policy 6.27, Faculty Workload. The revisions update the method for calculating workload associated with student teaching supervision to reflect a new model in which supervision responsibilities will be managed by academic departments rather than solely through the Teacher Education program. The changes support increased supervision by faculty within the relevant content areas and help ensure workload assignments are accurately reflected. The revisions also clarify workload reassignment for Associate Deans and align the policy with related University policies.

A motion to approve Policy 6.27 Faculty Workload as presented was made by Trustee Marilee Eyre and seconded by Trustee Darin Bird. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy 6.46 Academic Scheduling & Calendaring [Tab H](#)

Provost Mendini presented revisions to SUU Policy 6.46, Academic Scheduling and the Academic Calendar. The revisions update the policy to reflect current practices and processes used by the Registrar's Office and academic departments for academic scheduling and calendar management. The changes also clarify procedures for reviewing and processing scheduling and calendar revisions within the Registrar's Office.

Trustee Justin Harding moved to approve Policy 6.46, Academic Scheduling and the Academic Calendar, as presented. The motion was seconded by Trustee Jamie Shaw and passed unanimously.

President Benson concluded by expressing appreciation to Shauna Mendini for her dedicated service over the past few years and acknowledged the transition of responsibilities to Mary Pearson.

Replacement Aircraft Purchase Verbal

Vice President Mary Pearson discussed the need to replace a helicopter following an accident at Cedar City Airport on May 23, 2026. Mike Mower provided an update on the accident, the ongoing investigation, and the impact on the aviation program.

The accident resulted in a total loss of the aircraft. The instructor and student sustained injuries and were treated and released. The investigation into the cause of the accident remains underway, with a formal report expected within six to twelve months.

During the disassembly of the helicopter, it was noted that the aircraft had remained level and landed upright, which contributed to the safe shutdown of the aircraft and helped protect those on board. The program has increased the safety manual instructions through reflection on the incident. Appreciation was expressed for the honesty and transparency demonstrated in reporting the accident. The aircraft's maintenance was reported to have been pristine.

The insurance payout is expected to cover the majority of the cost of a replacement aircraft. Students and instructors will be gradually returned to their normal flight routines. The program emphasized that safety remains the highest priority, with safe flight and safety for the community taking precedence over training. Approximately 10 percent of all pilots are reported to come from SUU.

The program is looking for a Bell 206 model as a replacement aircraft. Only four suitable aircraft are currently available in the United States, and one aircraft was already sold before SUU could complete the purchase.

The aviation program is currently limited in its ability to provide students with required flight hours due to the loss of one aircraft. The Aviation and Finance Office are requesting approval to use program funds of up to \$1.5 million to purchase a replacement aircraft. No specific aircraft has been identified, but pre-approval was requested to allow for a timely purchase once a suitable aircraft

meeting program needs becomes available. The insurance payout is expected to cover the majority of the purchase cost.

Additional program updates included the June 27 opening of the new museum, where Builders of Utah will be featured in the SUU program. SUU's aviation program was recognized as the largest in the state and the largest collegiate program in the United States. The aviation maintenance program was also described as being on the leading edge.

A motion to approve the Replacement Aircraft Purchase, up to \$1.5 million as presented, was made by Trustee Darin Bird and seconded by Trustee Justin Harding. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT ITEMS

Investment Report - April 2026 [Tab I](#)

Vice President Mary Pearson presented the Investment Reports for April 2026. She noted that interest revenue remains strong, with no significant losses reported. The summary on page 4 reflected approximately \$1 million in investment income, including interest received and gains on securities. She also noted an adjustment to the Investment Committee that resulted in a significant increase.

A motion to approve the Investment Reports was made by Trustee Jamie Shaw and seconded by Trustee Marilee Eyre. The motion passed unanimously.

Vic Hockett provided a report and commented on the commencement event. He discussed an initiative providing \$7 million in funding across one of five states participating in the program, with an emphasis on growth and workforce development.

The initiative includes access to 500 Google licenses and is connected to the AI Workforce Council. The program will provide workforce credentials for students who graduated within the past two years or who will graduate within the next two years. Discussion included whether SUU has an expert who could support or participate in the initiative.

REPORTS

Trustee Report- Justin Harding on School of Business

Trustee Justin Harding highlighted the following:

- **New Building Expansion:** The new building expansion and ribbon-cutting ceremony in April were described as an amazing milestone for the School of Business.
- **Enrollment Growth:** Enrollment has increased by 250 percent since 2017. The current student population is approximately 45 percent female and 55 percent male, with an average high

school GPA of 3.5. First-generation student enrollment has increased from 28 percent to 33 percent, and approximately 10 percent of current students are international students. The online MBA program has been a significant contributor to the school's expansion.

- MBA Program: MBA students are already working in their respective careers, allowing them to apply their education directly to their professional experiences.
- Burgess Family: Trustee Harding shared appreciation for the Burgess family's story and their contributions to the School of Business.
- Professional Sales: Trustee Harding highlighted the school's professional sales program and its role in preparing students for careers in sales.

Trustee Report- Darin Bird on College of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics and Utah Shakespeare Festival

Trustee Darin Bird highlighted the following for the College of STEM:

- 144 course changes were made within STEM during the past year.
- The College of STEM continues to build relationships with community partners and adapt its programs to meet the evolving needs of industry.
- The Skaggs Mobile STEM Laboratory bus visits are planned in June throughout cities and towns in southern Utah, which will include hands-on activities and demonstrations related to areas such as geothermal science and geology. [STEM handout](#)
- STEM summer camps continue to provide students with opportunities for hands-on learning and exploration.
- The YEA Youth Engineering Academy provides opportunities for young students to explore engineering and STEM-related fields.

Utah Shakespeare Festival highlights included:

- The Festival is celebrating its 65th year, with a commemorative pamphlet distributed to each trustee.
- Hamlet is being presented for the 10th time at the Utah Shakespeare Festival and was described as a fantastic production.
- Something Rotten! was highlighted as a must-see and fun production.
- Three Green Show versions are being presented, including Americana, Celtic, and Stratford Night.
- June 26 will mark the celebration of the Beverley Center's 10th anniversary.
- The 2027 season will include a special limited run of All the Devils Are Here: How Shakespeare Invented the Villain by Patrick Page. The production will be held in the Eccles Music Center.

Faculty Senate Report

No report given; Faculty Senate will report at our next trustee meeting.

Staff Association Report

Ashleigh Zimmerman shared the following updates regarding the Staff Association:

- This was Ashleigh's final report to the group. The Staff Association's closing social had approximately 300 participants.
- The Staff Association worked with the Faculty Senate on the COLA agreement.
- Forty-six students received scholarships through Staff Association efforts.
- Approximately \$47,000 was provided in professional development funds.
- A total of 248 volunteers supported the Finish Strong and Start Stations events.

Chair Schmutz and President Benson recognized and thanked Ashleigh Zimmerman for her service and contributions to the Staff Association.

Adam Wilcock, who is the incoming Staff Association president, introduced himself and shared his goals for the Staff Association. He expressed a desire to grow the Caught Red-Handed Awards program and increase fundraising efforts to provide additional student scholarships.

Student Association Report

Trustee Kenzie Porter was out of town, and SUUSA Vice President Keegan Dickinson provided the student update. He shared the following highlights:

- He expressed appreciation for the support and care shown to students and noted that students can see and feel the love and support from the university community.
- Student morale is currently very high.
- A housing gap remains between the end of the academic year and the beginning of summer school, creating challenges for students who need housing during that transition period.
- The Swing Dance Club remains active and popular during the summer. Sand courts have also been added outside the PE Building for student recreation.
- The Eccles Center is fully active and staffed for the summer.
- The Utah Leadership Academy was held at Weber State University a few weeks ago. The event provided an opportunity for SUUSA leaders to build connections and strengthen relationships with student leaders from other colleges and universities.

President's Report

President Benson shared the following items:

- Utah Summer Games: Jon Oglesby provided a report on the Utah Summer Games, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary. He reflected on the program's growth and noted that this is a record year, including 123 fast-pitch softball teams competing this weekend. The Games also include 14 SUU certificates and credentials and events for Special Olympics athletes. The 24-team softball event includes many athletes recovering from addiction and provides a healthy and safe environment for competition. The 40th anniversary will also honor Rich Wilson and his legacy. Trustees were invited to attend and celebrate.
- Provost and CFO: Mary Pearson will assume the role of Provost. The search for a new CFO will remain open through the first week of July, with Trustee Darin Bird serving on the search committee. Matt Zufelt will serve as Interim CFO.
- Athletics: Myndee Kay will begin as Athletic Director in July.
- Big Sky Conference: President Benson reported on recent Big Sky Conference meetings and noted that SUU will have numerous home games. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to return to regular conference activities.
- Enrollment: President Benson discussed enrollment challenges related to the enrollment cliff and international student visa issues. The university is closely monitoring enrollment and is currently targeting a flat enrollment year.
- Trustee Retreat: The upcoming trustee retreat will include visits to the Utah Shakespeare Festival, STEM labs, and Aviation, followed by dinner. A trustee training and retreat is also planned for December.
- USHE Trustee Meeting: A USHE trustee meeting is anticipated in October. Trustees were asked to contact Melissa or Brynn for the date.
- Commencement: Under USHE policy, the Board of Trustees votes to approve commencement speakers. For the past two years, the university has selected alumni to serve as commencement speakers.
- Recognition: President Benson presented Marilee Eyre with a framed bell tower image in recognition of her service.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Darin Bird and seconded by Trustee Jamie Shaw. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Trustees Minutes approved: August 31, 2026

Signed: Dialea S. Adams