

History of UVU

Historical Development Summary

Utah Valley University was established in 1941 as Central Utah Vocational School (CUVS) with the primary function of providing war production training. Throughout its history, UVU has responded to its service region's (Utah, Wasatch and Summit counties) population changes and business/industry needs. This responsiveness is evidenced in its integrated dual mission, program offerings, degree levels, and enrollment changes.

More on the History of the University

In 1941, the nation was slowly recovering from the Great Depression. The shadow of war was creeping closer, and the need for arms and ammunition by the Allied forces demanded skilled craftsmen. Many citizens had benefited from the federal work programs during the Depression but needed more training to qualify for better jobs. Vocational classes were taught at various shops and businesses throughout Utah and Heber valleys under the direction of the State Vocational Office. In fall 1941, under the direction of Hyrum E. Johnson, those vocational training courses were moved to a central location in south Provo and named Central Utah Vocational School.

After World War II, 90% of the school's budget was lost with the cancellation of the war production training funds. A bill was introduced in the 1943 Utah Legislature to make the school a state-supported, two-year vocational school. The bill, although approved in the House, was defeated in the Senate. Cutbacks followed, and fewer classes were offered until the college received a \$50,000 operating costs appropriation for 1945 through 1947. The appropriation was strongly opposed by local two-year colleges and the two local universities because it posed a threat to the money those institutions received from the legislature. In 1947, the school received funding as a permanent state institution.

In 1945, Wilson W. Sorensen, the former purchasing agent for the school, was appointed director. Sorensen was instrumental in obtaining a new 13-acre site for the school in Provo, purchased by Provo City, Utah County, and the four local school districts with the understanding that the state would finance new college facilities.

In 1952, the state appropriated \$400,000 for the first phase of the Provo Campus. The complete facility was built in three phases and completed in 1963. The campus was designed for 1,200 students. In 1961, enrollment was nearing 1,000 students. By 1971, enrollment increased 100% to nearly 2,000, far more than the campus could accommodate.

Growth brought many changes to the college. During the Sorensen years, the name of the college changed several times to reflect these dynamics. Demand for more space sent college officials searching for land. One hundred and eighty-five acres of farmland were purchased in southwest Orem adjacent to Interstate 15. The first phase of the new campus used state and student funds for the first buildings and a \$1.5 million federal grant for landscaping. This initial campus was dedicated in March 1977 with a business and administration building. A learning resource center and trades building were added to the campus as soon as the state made funds available.

In 1982, Sorensen retired after 41 years of service and 37 years as president. J. Marvin Higbee, former president of Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, was named the third president of the college. President Higbee took on the challenge of broadening the image and scope of the college by offering expanded educational opportunities to all facets of the community. In 1987, the legislature changed the school's name to Utah Valley Community College to reflect this expanded mission.

The campus continued to expand under Higbee. Not only were major building projects initiated, but several education programs were also added to help the college keep pace with local demand. Higbee also emphasized the need for community support of the institution by focusing the involvement efforts of the Development Office, the Utah Valley Community College Foundation, and the Alumni Association. In 1988, Lucille Stoddard, vice president of academic affairs, was appointed interim president during the search for a new president.

Kerry D. Romesburg was appointed president in 1988 and led the college into an era of incredible growth. President Romesburg analyzed the needs of the students and directed his efforts toward filling those needs. With the student in mind, Romesburg initiated the conversion of the college to a semester calendar, the first state school to do so. Also under Romesburg's direction, emphasis on international education, arts and humanities, and short-term training was instilled throughout the curriculum. Due to his attention to international relations, UVCC became one of the first community colleges to sign an exchange agreement with Soviet Russia. Additional exchange agreements were created with China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Germany.

Romesburg focused on small class sizes, academics, and the valuable trades and vocational training UVCC offered. During Romesburg's tenure, which stretched from 1991 to 2002, student enrollment skyrocketed. Some 8,700 students walked the halls in 1991, while more than 23,000 enrolled in 2002.

In 1992, the Utah System of Higher Education and the Board of Regents proposed an initial offering of four-year degrees at UVCC. Romesburg jumped at the opportunity to increase the college's offerings. Business Management, Computer Science and Information Systems, and Technology Management were the first three bachelor degree programs offered.

After noting the institution was growing and expanding its mission and focus, the Board of Regents changed the name to Utah Valley State College in 1993, and the school received its provisional accreditation from the Northwest Accreditation Association. Additionally, a five-year consortium agreement was established between UVSC and the Kiev College of Hotel Management in the Ukraine, and UVSC became the first institution in the United States to receive accreditation for programs offered in the former Soviet Union. Official accreditation was awarded June 22, 1994.

The rest of the 1990s saw significant growth for the new state college. By 2003 the grand total of bachelor's programs was 33, along with more than 50 associate degrees, and certifications, diplomas, and concurrent enrollment programs.

The Center for the Study of Ethics was created in 1993, with an emphasis on training ethical leaders. In 2001, UVSC was awarded the Theodore M. Hesburgh Award, a \$30,000 cash prize rewarding innovative ethics curricula that inspired similar initiatives at other schools. In 1996, the David O. McKay Events Center for special events was completed and dedicated on the Orem Campus. UVSC, a member of the National Junior Collegiate Athletic Association, saw not only many Utah Valley athletic events but also many community trade shows, concerts, and conferences. In January 1997, the single-game attendance record for an NJCAA team was set at 8,063 in the McKay Events Center.

The late 1990s and the early 2000s saw extensive construction on campus. UVSC announced the Liberal Arts Building to be completed in August 2003, and the Utah County Journal Building was purchased on the southeast side of campus and remodeled.

Other campus expansions included the addition of the Wasatch Campus in Heber City, Utah. UVU then had campus offerings in both the north and south ends of Utah Valley. Additionally, UVSC opened the Woodbury Art Museum at the University Mall in Orem, displaying contemporary student and faculty works along with other artists and exhibits.

In 2002, Romesburg left for another administrative position and Lucille Stoddard, vice president of academic affairs, was again appointed interim president during the search for a new president. William A. Sederburg was chosen as the fifth president of UVSC. President Sederburg previously led Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, a school with both undergraduate and graduate programs.

In that same year, the school was given a provisional status in the NCAA Division I athletic competition. UVSC started D-I play in the 2003-2004 school year. A new wrestling program was added and continues to be the only one of its kind in the state of Utah. Other intercollegiate programs include men's baseball, basketball, cross-country, golf, and track and field, as well as women's basketball, cross-country, golf, soccer, softball, track and field, and volleyball. A new baseball stadium was added in 2005. Also in 2005, what had been the Vineyard Elementary School was remodeled to house the School of Education.

In September 2006, ground was broken for a new 190,000-square foot library to be completed in 2008. In February 2007, the Utah Legislature unanimously voted to make Utah Valley State College a university in 2008. With the new name came a new mission, mission statement, and set of core values to guide the University in the coming years. On July 1, 2008, UVSC officially became Utah Valley University and the UVU Library held its ribbon-cutting ceremony. Additionally, the Capitol Reef Field Station opened in October 2008 as a unique learning facility within a national park.

In August 2008, President Sederburg resigned his position as president of UVU in order to fulfill his new responsibilities as commissioner of higher education in Utah. Dr. Elizabeth Hitch, vice president of academic affairs, was appointed as interim president, and Karl Worthington assumed Hitch's prior duties after Worthington was named acting vice president of academic affairs.

Under President Sederburg's leadership, a strategic planning model was developed that aligned planning with budgeting and accountability (PBA). The athletic and academic programs prospered. The institution went from college to university status. The number of bachelor's degrees offered went from 31 in 2003 to 58 in 2009. Today the University offers 91 bachelor's degrees, and the number continues to grow. UVU began offering master degrees in the fall of 2008 with the Master of Education. In the fall of 2009, the Master of Nursing was offered, and a Master of Business Administration began fall 2010. The total master's programs UVU offered in 2019 was 11.

On June 1, 2009, Dr. Matthew S. Holland was selected as the University's sixth president. President Holland realized the need for additional facilities with the burgeoning student population. In March 2010, the Utah Legislature approved funding for the new Science Building, which was completed April 2012. The new Facilities Building, Noorda Theatre, Business Resource Center, expanded Wee Care Center, Student Life and Wellness Building, and Clarke Building were all approved and completed during his tenure, along with numerous remodeling projects.

UVU was granted official NCAA Division I membership on July 7, 2009, after a seven-year provisional process. UVU became a member of the Great West Conference and received three consecutive Commissioner's Cups for highest performance of all athletic teams. New facilities were added for track, soccer, and softball. On July 1, 2013, UVU began a new era in the Western Athletic Conference. Student-athletes won academic and athletic honors, including a softball national title and a 32-game winning streak by the baseball team in 2012.

The University made several changes to the institution's schools and colleges with the move to university status, including the naming of the Woodbury School of Business. The other schools and colleges include the School of the Arts, School of Education, University College, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Science, College of Engineering and Technology, and College of Health and Public Service.

President Holland was instrumental in UVU's designation as an All-Steinway School, the development of a Business Engagement Strategy, the addition of the Freshman Reading Program and Presidential Lecture Series, the development of a strategic enrollment management plan and strategic planning advisory council, the creation of the Women's Success Center, and the Center for Global and Intercultural Engagement to support the institution's inclusive focus.

Structured enrollment was instituted in Fall 2012 to maintain UVU's historical role as an open-admission institution while increasing the seriousness of the university experience. Enrollment in fall 2011 topped at 33,395 students. President Holland oversaw the development and approval of a 40-year university master plan. This included purchases of land in Payson and 250 acres in nearby Vineyard. Under Holland's leadership, public and private funding was secured for 12 major buildings and more than 1 million square feet of space. Holland demonstrated his inclusivity for all with the creation of ecumenical Reflection Center, a Veteran Success Center, an LGBT Student Services Office, and an award-winning campus Inclusion Plan. During his tenure, enrollment of students of color increased by 110% and faculty of color by 112%.

In 2016, President Holland commissioned and oversaw the development of the nationally and internationally recognized Roots of Knowledge stained glass windows, a 200-foot-wide panorama of the world's most important advances in human knowledge and understanding. Holland left the University in 2018 when he was called as a mission president for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Dr. Astrid S. Tuminez was appointed the seventh president of Utah Valley University in 2018, and she is the institution's first woman to serve as the full-time president. Tuminez brings to UVU a broad and rich experience in academia, philanthropy, technology, and business. Born in a farming village in the Philippine province of Iloilo, Tuminez moved with her parents and six siblings to the slums of Iloilo City when she was 2 years old, her parents seeking better educational opportunities for their children. Her pursuit of education eventually took her to the United States, to Brigham Young University where she graduated summa cum laude in 1986 with a bachelor's degree in international relations and Russian literature. She earned a master's degree from Harvard University in Soviet Studies (1988) and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in political science (1996).

Before assuming her current position, President Tuminez was a world leader in the fields of technology and political science, most recently serving as an executive at Microsoft, where she led corporate, external, and legal affairs in Southeast Asia. Tuminez is also the former vice dean of research and assistant dean of executive education at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, the premier school of public policy in Asia. She and her husband, Jeffrey S. Tolk, have three children.

STUDENT

- [ADMISSIONS](#)
- [ACADEMICS](#)
- [CAMPUS LIFE](#)
- [LOOKING TO ATTEND UVU](#)
- [CURRENT STUDENT](#)
- [ACCREDITATION](#)

EMPLOYEES

- [CAREER OPPORTUNITIES](#)
- [EMPLOYEE RESOURCES](#)
- [DIRECTORY](#)
- [PEOPLE & CULTURE](#)

COMMUNITY

- [ATHLETICS](#)
- [VISITORS & COMMUNITY](#)
- [OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT](#)
- [ABOUT UVU / HISTORY](#)
- [ALUMNI](#)
- [INCLUSION & DIVERSITY](#)
- [ESPAÑOL](#)
- [GIVE TO UVU](#)
- [CONTACT US](#)

UTILITY

- [COVID-19 INFO](#)
- [MAPS / PARKING](#)
- [SERVICE DESK](#)
- [EMERGENCY](#)
- [POLICE](#)
- [GET HELP](#)
- [SEARCH](#)
- [ACCESSIBILITY](#)
- [TITLE IX / EQUAL OPPORTUNITY](#)