Brilliant Opportunities
Dear Weber State Family:

Weber State University is all in on student success.

Our students thrive because of support from peers, staff, faculty and the community. As you read this report on Weber State’s achievements, you should see yourself and the invaluable contributions you make to keeping Weber State great, Great, GREAT!

Stories in this report align with the goals of our strategic plan, Weber State Amplified, a 5-year plan for growth, which you can read in its entirety at weber.edu/strategic-plan.

Just as important, they convey a sense of belonging students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds experience every day at our university.

Weber State’s culture of inclusion and meeting students where they are has led to success for many. David Gonzalez (page 17), who participated in Wildcat Scholars, one of our premier college transition programs, went on to a meaningful career with Weber County Corrections after graduation. Jessica Stratton (page 16) overcame homelessness to become a 4.0 student and won the Student Pathway Award from the Women Tech Council. In addition, students in our theatre program (page 27) earned top national recognition for their amazing design work, and our Spirit Squad (page 43) continues to take top national honors.

Locally and nationally, Weber State’s impact is GREAT.

Turn to our Community Connections section (page 30) to learn how WSU is changing the academic, economic and cultural landscape. The Missile Energy Research Center is now open at the Miller Advanced Research and Solutions Center. Weber State will train Utah teachers to improve the K-12 classroom experience of ESL students. The university also has expanded its support for the military by partnering with the Rosie Project to give a tuition-free information technology education to military spouses.

We are also excited about many campus improvements, such as the new Noorda Engineering Building, a vibrant space for Early College and Weber State students to become leaders in STEM; and the OGX all-electric bus rapid transit line, which runs from Ogden’s FrontRunner station to McKay-Dee Hospital and through our beautiful campus.

The accomplishments included in this year’s report illustrate what makes Weber State brilliant.

Happy reading, and go Wildcats!

Brad L. Mortensen
President
LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS: weber.edu/strategic-plan

AMPLIFIED
A 5-year plan for growth
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

ELIMINATING DISPARITIES IN OUTCOMES FOR UNDERSERVED STUDENTS
WSU STREAMLINES SERVICES FOR

UTAH’S FASTEST-GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC

Xitlalli Villanueva, a spring 2023 graduate in microbiology and sociology, served as vice president of Diversity and Unity for the Weber State University Student Association and as student representative on the Utah Board of Higher Education. As a student leader, she sought to amplify the needs and stories of Utah students.

“I wanted students to be more aware of the higher education system, but I also wanted the system to be more aware of students and how it can help them,” she said.

WSU shares Villanueva’s goal of meeting students where they are. The university committed to streamlining services for Hispanic and Latino students, coinciding with its strategic plan, Weber State Amplified, a 5-year plan for growth. The plan commits WSU to increasing the percentage of students who identify as Hispanic or Latino to 15% by 2025, becoming an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution. The declaration resulted in a $500,000 grant from Ally Financial Inc. to hire Yudi Lewis as executive director of Hispanic-Serving Institution Initiatives.

Utah’s K–12 public education system is about 20% Hispanic or Latino, and about 50% of Ogden School District’s students represent the demographic. Welcoming more of these students to Weber State will mean more youth from local schools go to college and gain the in-demand skills employers are seeking, improving the economy.

During the spring 2023 semester, Gina Garcia, author of Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities, engaged with staff, faculty and students about the goal, along with approaches to classroom practices and support services.

Throughout the 2022–23 academic year, Lewis collaborated with university departments, other Utah institutions and community partners to strategically align how the university serves and supports students through graduation. Latino and Hispanic student enrollment increased by nearly half a percentage point in fall 2021 and, again, in fall 2022. Hispanic and Latino students represented 12.5% of students in fall 2022.

“We are transforming generations, one student at a time,” Lewis said.
Weber State became one of 70-plus partner colleges across the country with TheDream.US, the nation’s largest college and career success program for undocumented students. This partnership is providing nearly $1.2 million in scholarships to WSU Dreamers for the 2023–24 academic year.

“This scholarship is instrumental in helping me achieve my dreams,” said Bianca Alvarado, a microbiology student and scholarship recipient. “I now have the freedom to focus on my studies and academic goals.”

Thirty-one students are receiving scholarships in the first year, and WSU plans to increase the number of students who benefit from this program in the years to come. The funding will cover the cost of tuition for up to six years or until students complete their degree, allowing recipients to attend school with less financial stress.

“For a really long time, I worried that my family and I would have to face the financial burden of college alone,” said Hannia Sandoval Gonzalez, a scholarship recipient and social work major.

“Receiving this scholarship proved me wrong and it showed me that all my hard work is worth it.”
The Stewart Library spent the 2022–23 academic year eliminating barriers and increasing access for the entire Weber State community.

“We still have a long way to go, but that is also a result of understanding that creating a more equitable educational environment isn’t a matter of simply checking off a few boxes,” said Wendy Holliday, dean of the library. “Our goal is to be less transactional and more relational. That means showing up for traditionally marginalized and underserved populations outside of the library, too, by attending events and listening to their concerns at meetings and other gatherings.”
**WSU hosts discussion about EDI in higher education**

A larger-than-capacity audience gathered for Weber State’s panel discussion on the often-debated concept of equity, diversity and inclusion at higher education institutions.

Each spring, the Haven J. Barlow Civic Leadership Forum examines a high-profile bill introduced in the Utah State Legislature. In March 2023, the discussion centered on Senate Bill 283. The measure, sponsored by state Sen. John D. Johnson, R-North Ogden, as it was originally introduced, sought to prohibit the funding or maintenance of diversity, equity and inclusion offices. It was amended to study these programs across Utah campuses before failing to pass. Panelists included Johnson; Sen. Luz Escamilla, D-Salt Lake City; Cari Bartholomew, host of the Be Not Afraid podcast; and Rep. Angela Romero, D-Salt Lake City.

Professor of Political Science Leah Murray, who moderated the conversation, said the discussion revealed a lack of consensus about the definition and purpose of EDI offices.

Murray said panelists discussed the importance of understanding EDI work on campuses and about plans for a study to that end.

Murray said she was most impressed with the compassion and cooperation student participants displayed. “Our students heard discourse they disagreed with, but did not do anything to impede the conversation from happening,” she said.

The event was hosted by the Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service.

“Conducting a civic leadership forum like this allows us to hear different policy points of view in our campus free marketplace of ideas and cultivate civic dispositions.”

— LEAH MURRAY

**AMPLIFYING LGBTQ+ VOICES**

Weber State University Special Collections’ Queering the Archives, an initiative to fill gaps in WSU’s historical record to include LGBTQ+ communities in Weber, Davis and Morgan counties, amplified community voices throughout the 2022–23 academic year.

Four WSU students helped collect 42 oral history interviews and host the Rainbow Letters exhibit, which highlighted messages from community members to people in the future about being LGBTQ+ today, at Union Station and the Stewart Library.

“It has been absolutely amazing to me how many people have been so willing to share their experiences, both the good and the bad,” said Sarah Langsdon, head of Special Collections.

Queering the Archives also supported Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering & Science graduate and WSU Early College student Sammy Langsdon, Sarah’s son, as he completed his senior capstone project titled the I Matter Project, which collected artwork, photos and poems from LGBTQ+ youth that tell the story of why they matter.
Retention & Completion

INCREASING RETENTION AND COMPLETION ACROSS ALL STUDENT POPULATIONS
The College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology supported Weber State’s retention and completion goals throughout the 2022–23 academic year by stepping up efforts to keep students engaged.

The School of Computing’s Retention Teaching League held monthly meetings for faculty and staff to exchange ideas to improve teaching and retention. Discussion topics included classroom late policies, scheduling office hours on Google Calendar, online discussion boards and more.

The Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering used university faculty development and industry partner funding to engage underrepresented and female students through faculty-led research, peer mentorship and showcasing equipment and laboratories.

Women in Computing, Engineering & Technology, a community of students, faculty and staff committed to increasing engagement and retention in STEM, held events on and off campus for all students. They included guest speakers, hands-on learning and networking opportunities. Students in the group also attended Women Tech Council events at Adobe’s Utah headquarters and The Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City.

In July 2022, Weber State recognized the Department of Professional Sales for having the university’s highest first-year retention rate. The work to achieve the honor included staying up to date on retention data, advisors staying in touch with students, promoting departmental honors, bringing employers to classes, increasing course accessibility and continuing to offer online degrees.

WSU’s strategic plan outlines goals to reduce the eight-year completion gaps between the overall student population and low-income; first-generation; Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC); underrepresented; and developmental math and English students. The plan also seeks to increase retention among first-time students.

Read the full plan at weber.edu/strategic-plan.
A NEW LEADER FOR ACCESS & SUCCESS

Weber State appointed Jessica Oyler as vice president of the Student Access & Success division in May 2023. As leader of the recently realigned division, Oyler will help the university meet its strategic plan goals by working with the campus and community to address enrollment challenges and helping students succeed.

Oyler has over 15 years of higher education experience. She previously served as associate provost, assistant vice president of Human Resources and executive director of Student Affairs Strategic Initiatives.

WELCOMING A CHIEF DATA OFFICER

Ivana Fredotovic, who previously served as director of research and data analytics at Miami Dade College, became WSU's first chief data officer during the 2022–23 academic year. As CDO, Fredotovic will be charged with developing a comprehensive strategy for student data and analytics with the goal of ensuring more students are retained and complete their degrees.

Provost Ravi Krovi said hiring Fredotovic is a defining moment since WSU is among the first to hire a CDO.
A report from The College Board states that students at four-year institutions budgeted an average of $1,240 for books and supplies for the 2022–23 academic year.

At WSU, the Affordable Course Materials Task Force works to ease that burden.

The task force consists of staff from Stewart Library, Wildcat Store and its marketing team and WSU Online, as well as faculty. It formed in 2018, but stepped up its efforts as students dealt with financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One way they’ve helped is with Open Educational Resources (OER), materials that are in the public domain or released under a license allowing them to be freely used, modified or shared. The task force awards grants for faculty to train in using the materials. The first year of grants were awarded using Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund money, and they are now funded by the Provost’s Office and library funds.

Since the grant program started, OER materials have helped students save over $1.6 million, including $790,527 during the 2023 fiscal year.

The task force also encourages faculty to embrace Course Reserves, which include book chapters, films and more in the library databases; and Day One Access, a collaborative program between the Wildcat Store, faculty and publishers to give students access to digital materials at a reduced cost.

In 2023, the task force presented Course Materials Affordability Awards to Kathleen Paco Cadman, associate professor of nursing; Sara Dant, professor of history; and the Department of Foreign Languages faculty for making WSU more affordable for students.
MEETING THE DEMAND FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Weber State’s new graduate program in physician assistant studies welcomed its first class of 20 students in January 2023, making it the 20th graduate degree offered at WSU. The program focuses on primary and hospital care for adults.

WSU fulfills the need for Master of Social Work graduates

Mental health care providers in northern Utah are struggling to fill positions that require a Master of Social Work degree due to a shortage of professionals in the field. WSU answered the call with a new degree that saw its first graduating class of 44 students in spring 2023. Near April’s graduation, about 94% of the class had a job lined up or had already started.

Justin Sciarini found out he landed a job at the Weber State Counseling and Psychological Services Center, where he had also worked as an intern, soon after graduation.

“The Weber State community is where I knew I wanted to be,” he said. “I wanted to continue the work I had started, to continue to grow the relationships and networks that I had made. I knew there was so much more I could do, and I am excited to be able to continue.”
IN CHARGE OF HER FUTURE, DESPITE LIFE’S OBSTACLES

A few years ago, Jessica Stratton was living in her car with $2.08 to her name. Now she’s a 4.0 student studying computer science, and recently received the Student Pathway Award from Utah’s Women Tech Council.

Stratton left a turbulent home at 18 with dreams of going to college. Losing her mother to ovarian cancer in 2020 renewed that desire. Through financial aid and private scholarships, she found her way to WSU, where she’s honing the same passions that she pursued as a child and throughout high school: all things computers.

“I looked into other universities, but I felt like a number to them — a test score, a GPA,” Stratton said. “But at Weber State, I feel valued as a person. Being here helped me see that I’m in charge of my own future.”

Stratton plans to graduate in 2025 and pursue a career that fuses technology and art. She also wants to inspire people of all backgrounds to believe in themselves.

“I’m not ashamed of my past — that’s still part of me,” she said. “It doesn’t matter where you come from, as long as you know what you want and are moving forward.”
Past hardship drives criminal justice graduate’s future

David Gonzalez grew up seeing the effects substance abuse had on loved ones. Those formative experiences inspired his educational and career goals.

“I had family members who would abuse alcohol and prescription drugs,” said Gonzalez, a recent graduate of WSU. “Being surrounded by all of that definitely shaped why I wanted to study criminal justice.”

Gonzalez said his parents emphasized the importance of education, but getting started felt daunting. Thankfully, GEAR UP advisors helped him with admissions and financial aid, while the Wildcat Scholars program provided mentorship and introduced him to other students from diverse backgrounds.

While at Weber, Gonzalez’s professors connected him to an internship with the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System, which solidified his interest in working within the justice system.

Now Gonzalez is earning a master’s degree in social work while interning with Salt Lake County Jail’s mental health team. He’s confident his experiences — both personal and professional — give him unique insight to help the individuals he’ll be working with.
A LOOK AT WSU’S BRILLIANT STUDENTS

FALL 2022 ENROLLMENT
29,914

BY COUNTY OF ORIGIN

46% Davis
30% Weber
Box Elder: 2%
Salt Lake: 6%
Other Utah areas: 8%
Other U.S. states: 6%
International: 1%

12.5% HISPANIC & LATINO STUDENTS

Hispanic and Latino students represented 12.5% of students in fall 2022, making strides toward WSU’s goal to become an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution with 15%.

680 VETERANS ATTENDED WSU IN FALL 2022

2022 UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT MEASUREMENTS

79.85% HIGH YIELD AWARDS
Certificates or degrees awarded in fields identified by the Utah Department of Workforce Services as high-wage and high-demand

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION
Students who graduated within 150% of a normal degree timeframe

TOP 10 DEGREE AREAS
(Degrees awarded for academic year 2018–19 through 2022–23, excluding general studies)

1 Nursing ........................................ 4,131
2 School of Computing .......................... 2,095
3 School of Radiologic Sciences .................. 1,147
4 Professional Sales .............................. 1,096
5 Medical Laboratory Sciences ................. 933
6 Health Sciences ............................... 931
7 Health Administrative Services .................. 823
8 Teacher Education ............................ 757
9 Communication .................................. 720
10 Criminal Justice .............................. 691

STUDENTS FROM ALL 50 U.S. STATES & 55 FOREIGN COUNTRIES ATTENDED IN FALL 2022

79.85% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT

30% HIGH YIELD AWARDS

36.3% TIMELY COMPLETION

20% MILITARY SUPPORT
PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

WSU PROVIDED MORE THAN $89.9 MILLION* in scholarships and financial aid to 12,676 STUDENTS in the 2022–23 academic year.

MEDIAN BS/BA GRADUATE SALARY

$67,266
Based on fifth-year median wages of 2017–18 bachelor’s degree graduates

DISTRIBUTION OF DEGREES & AWARDS 2022–23*

- 47.1% associate’s degrees
- 37.6% bachelor’s degrees
- 8.6% certificates
- 0.5% doctoral degrees
- 6.2% master’s degrees

WSU IN THE COMMUNITY

STUDENTS SERVING
2,628

STUDENTS RECORDED
87,852.82 HOURS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WEBER CARES FOOD & RESOURCE PANTRY

2,017 CLIENT VISITS
21,257.06 POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED

*Preliminary data as of August 2023, subject to change

Discover how WSU stays involved in the community at weber.edu/cce.
DEDICATION TO SUSTAINABILITY

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities selected WSU to receive the 2023 AASCU Excellence & Innovation Award for Sustainability and Sustainable Development for its plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040.

“We’re extremely proud of this achievement,” said Brad Mortensen, WSU president. “We’re 10 years ahead of schedule in reaching our carbon neutral goal, but we’re even more excited that our model is catching the eye of other institutions across the country who take sustainability seriously and are looking to replicate our success here in Utah.”

AASCU will formally recognize WSU’s achievements at a ceremony in November 2023.

WSU REDUCED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Gas Consumption</th>
<th>Water Consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions</th>
<th>Electricity Consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While growing by 679,800+ square feet

As of fiscal year 2022, compared to a 2007 baseline

WSU HAS SAVED OVER $21 MILLION in avoided utility costs since 2010

90 WSU DEPARTMENTS participate in the Green Department Certification Program, which incentivizes departments to make campus more sustainable.

DEDICATION TO SUSTAINABILITY

WSU HAS SAVED OVER $21 MILLION in avoided utility costs since 2010

90 WSU DEPARTMENTS participate in the Green Department Certification Program, which incentivizes departments to make campus more sustainable.
Facts & Figures

STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO
21:1

80% FACULTY WITH TERMINAL DEGREES

225+ DEGREE PROGRAMS

20 GRADUATE DEGREES
Including the Doctor of Nursing Practice and Master of Physician Assistant Studies, which welcomed its first cohort in spring 2023
Tess Wunderlich, now a medical laboratory technologist, gained her skills at Weber State.
Personal Connections & Academic Excellence

ENSURING EVERY STUDENT HAS RICH AND IMPACTFUL RELATIONSHIPS
Kristin Rabosky, associate professor of physics, and Elizabeth Balgord, associate professor of earth and environmental sciences, led a three-year project that spanned across physical science programs to receive Weber State’s Exemplary Collaboration Award.

The project saw faculty and students collecting and analyzing zircon-bearing rock samples using electron microscopy and mineral separation techniques. Students in earth and environmental sciences collected, processed and ran samples to determine the age of the rocks, while physics students developed protocols for imaging the grains and processing those images, gathering information on the composition of various zones within the zircons.

The findings will be used to piece together the geologic history of northern Utah.

“It’s been an eye-opening experience to see students in the sciences talking to each other in a way that you don’t normally see at the undergraduate level,” Rabosky said. “It’s been fun to see our students grow through this project, and we’re excited to see where this takes us over the next few years.”

The project resulted in a National Science Foundation grant to secure new equipment and collaborate with other researchers regionally and nationally.
Art professor recognized for putting teaching first

Weber State selected art professor Matthew Choberka as the 2022 Hinckley Award recipient for excellence in teaching, scholarship and community engagement.

Choberka came to WSU in 2005 and has served as a teacher, chair of the Department of Visual Art and Design and the director of the Matthew S. Browning Center for Design, a collaborative space focused on urban arts design and planning.

“Weber State is the kind of place where ambitions, and even daydreams, are rewarded,” Choberka said. “In my different positions here, I’ve been able to keep up my research and find that balance between my studio practice and teaching while also helping students become better artists and patrons.”

Choberka joined Deborah Uman, Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities dean; Lydia Gravis, director of art exhibitions and public programs at the Shaw Gallery; and many others in establishing Ogden’s Dumke Arts Plaza, a public space dedicated to art exhibits and performances. His art has been showcased nationally and internationally, including two solo exhibits in Beaux-Arts des Ameriques in Montreal, Canada.

“Weber State is the kind of place where ambitions, and even daydreams, are rewarded.”
— MATTHEW CHOBERKA

SPEECH AND DEBATE TEAMS SEE SUCCESS

Weber State’s speech and debate teams earned national recognition during the 2022–23 academic year. After only four years of competing, the speech team became No. 6 in the nation. The team also won a series of regional tournaments, gaining the title of Northwest Forensics Champions.

“Weber State is a place where we can delve into the difficult conversations that accompany personal growth and development,” said Mark Galaviz, speech team director. “Our scholars can compete with any program to ensure those conversations are occurring.”

The university’s debate team also had a year of accomplishments, including attending the National Debate Tournament. Additionally, the team hosted two successful on-campus tournaments.

Lauren Johnson, debate team director, said participation numbers have been high.

“Debate is unique in its ability to truly teach students how and why to use their voice in the service of what matters to them,” Johnson said. “I am confident Weber debate will not disappoint in the years to come.”
Program helps foster kids attend, navigate college

The U.S. Department of Education reports children in foster care are at high-risk of dropping out of school and unlikely to go on to college.

That’s why the Youngberg family founded the Ogden Foster Scholarship Program, which provides financial and personal support to help foster youth enroll and graduate from Weber State.

Scholarship recipient Raquel Andreasen said the program helped her stay in school and pursue her ambitions.

“It really allowed me to focus on school and not have to worry about outside stressors,” Andreasen said.

The Youngberg family’s donation covers a first-year student’s tuition, fees and housing. It also includes a stipend for books, computers or other unmet needs.

Their support will give more students like Andreasen an opportunity to attend college.

ELITE ACCREDITATION RENEWED FOR BUSINESS AND ACCOUNTING

Weber State’s John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics is among fewer than 3% of business schools worldwide to receive Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business accreditation for both business and accounting.

AACSB renewed both of the accreditations during the spring 2023 semester.

While over 900 schools have AACSB business accreditation, fewer than 200 have the supplemental accounting accreditation. WSU initially received the accounting accreditation in 1989, and the business accreditation in 1992.

The recognition supports programs like the Jerry & Vickie Moyes Center for Supply Chain Excellence’s partnership with Red Barn Academy, a residential therapeutic center for men with a history of substance abuse. The program offers supply chain training to Red Barn residents, and welcomed its second cohort in fall 2022.
Weber State theatre design students Marley Keith and Porter Lance were honored for their work on the WSU production of Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street at the National Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Washington, D.C.

After Keith won for lighting design and Lance won for scenic design in a regional festival in February, they again won in those categories in the national competition in April 2023.

The judges also invited Keith to present her work as one of the American student representatives at the Prague Quadrennial international theatre festival in June 2023. Additionally, the judges selected Lance for the National Partners of American Theatre Andy Gibbs Design Award, which comes with a cash prize.
B. Drake R. Alton and Michael Anaafi have put in long hours in the labs at Weber State, and in 2022 it paid off.

The two won third place in the Minorities Poster Session at the American Society for Cell Biology’s Cell Bio 2022 conference in front of an audience of 4,000 people in Washington, D.C. The recognition was the culmination of submitting an abstract to the conference, and then having their poster presentation scored by multiple judges.

“Michael and I would not have won this award if it weren’t for some very late nights we spent working in the lab and thoroughly preparing to present our discoveries,” Alton said. “It doesn’t take genius to be a top-notch researcher, it takes long hours of painstaking work.”

The pair first met in an organic chemistry lab group in fall 2020 and then their paths crossed again in an anatomy lab, but it was spring 2022 when zoology professor Barb Trask encouraged Anaafi to join Alton’s research project examining how the diabetic drug metformin affected certain breast cancer cells.

“The genes I focused on, matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs), are typically inactive in healthy individuals,” Anaafi explained. “In cancer patients, MMPs are activated and it triggers eating up the surrounding good tissue.”

For Anaafi though, this was personal. His mother lost her three-year battle with ovarian cancer in 2020.

“In conducting this research, I’ve come to understand so much more about cancer and how it affects the human body,” Anaafi said.

Their big win at the conference was further validation of all he’s learned.

Since then, the two have both graduated from Weber State. Alton started medical school at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix and Anaafi is in the process of applying to medical schools for fall 2024, and is considering a career in oncology.
Michael Anaafi, left, and B. Drake R. Allon are recent graduates from the College of Science at Weber State University.
Weber State students and staff painted a Waldo mural on 25th Street in Ogden ahead of Weber State's 2022 Homecoming Week.
Community Connections

Partnering with communities to seek a sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental system
An Outstanding Senior

Judging by her TikTok following, Sharon Barber may be the most popular student at Weber State. The 79-year-old TikTok sensation, known as “grandmagreat,” has more than 2.5 million followers. Barber shares inspirational messages with all her “TikTok grandchildren,” concluding each installment with her signature line, “I love you.” CBS Evening News featured Barber on its broadcast in March 2023.

“Just do your best,” said Barber, who plans to earn her bachelor’s degree in creative writing. “That’s all. It doesn’t matter how old you are.”

Still No. 1

One of WSU’s most famous alumni reminded the sports world he will always bleed purple. Six-time NBA all-star and 2015 WSU graduate Damian Lillard returned to Utah for the 2023 NBA All-Star game, held in Salt Lake City. The Portland Trail Blazers point guard honored his Weber State roots by wearing a Wildcat jersey en route to winning the 3-point contest. Then “Dame” followed up by scoring the game-winning shot in the All-Star Game, proving, yet again, why he’s still “No. 1” in the hearts of Wildcat fans.

$1.8 MILLION
ESTIMATED VALUE OF SHARON BARBER’S NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

$1.2 MILLION
ESTIMATED VALUE OF LILLARD’S NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE

948
NUMBER OF NEWS STORIES NATIONWIDE THAT REPORTED ON GRANDMAGREAT
WEBER STATE CUTS RIBBON ON NOORDA ENGINEERING BUILDING

WSU opened the state-of-the-art Noorda Engineering, Applied Science & Technology Building in 2022, thanks to funding from the State of Utah and a generous gift from the Ray & Tye Noorda Foundation. Designed by VCBO Architecture, the building boasts over 138,000 square feet, containing 15 engineering labs, 14 classrooms and nine computer labs. It’s home to Ogden’s Northern Utah Academy for Math, Engineering & Science and contains eight high school classrooms and lab spaces. WSU salvaged over 15,000 square feet of the Technical Education Building that once stood on the site to create the nearby Noorda High Bay Building, housing the college’s Concept Center and National Center for Automotive Service & Technology.

Chatting up ChatGPT

Amidst discussion surrounding AI technology, Weber State professional sales associate professor Alex Lawrence says higher education should embrace ChatGPT rather than shun it. Lawrence shared that message in the Wall Street Journal in January 2023, which led to national media opportunities with a variety of outlets, from CNN to Morning in America.
In August 2022, Weber State opened the Miller Advanced Research and Solutions Center, formerly the USTAR Building, thanks to a generous gift from the Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation. Students and faculty at the center, located at the Falcon Hill Aerospace Research Park, assist Hill Air Force Base in accomplishing national defense objectives by conducting research and completing engineering projects.

“The MARS Center moves the university to the forefront of our aerospace ecosystem in northern Utah, providing a physical space where industry and government partners can come together to support Utah’s aerospace and defense businesses,” said WSU President Brad Mortensen. “Thanks to a substantial gift from the Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation, this center has the potential to transform our economy and set us up for success in the future.”
Weber State receives vital funding from Intermountain Health

Intermountain Health provided over $1 million to help increase enrollment and develop future health professions programs. The funds support Weber State’s new physician assistant program, the Diversity in Healthcare scholarship program, and Ogden Civic Action Network (OgdenCAN).

“Weber State truly benefits from having such a strong partnership with Intermountain McKay-Dee Hospital,” said Yasmen Simonian, dean of the Dr. Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions. “They’ve helped us secure the best equipment and space, which allows us to provide hands-on education to our students so they’re confident and ready to join the healthcare workforce when they graduate.”

$1.2 MILLION FOR WEBER STATE’S WILDCAT MICROFUND FROM AMERICA FIRST CREDIT UNION

Weber State is helping military spouses gain skills for exciting careers. Started in January 2023 and named after Rosie the Riveter — the namesake of a campaign aimed at recruiting female workers during World War II — the Rosie Project provides tuition-free classes and childcare to military spouses. Students earn industry-recognized certifications that prepare them for employment with Hill Air Force Base and the Department of Defense. Those interested can find more information at roseiproject.org.

13 STUDENTS ENROLLED AS OF SUMMER 2023

Wildcat MicroFund Set to Expand Statewide

Weber State’s Wildcat MicroFund received a $1.2 million gift from America First Credit Union to help expand services throughout Utah. Housed in the John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics, the MicroFund offers cash grants of up to $3,000, plus networking opportunities, for WSU students and local entrepreneurs. Since 2018, it has awarded over 300 grants to businesses in industries such as construction, education, tourism and more.

Ogden local Tania Rodriguez received enough money to afford a new food truck for Los Churros del Norte, which serves buñuelos and other Mexican food.

OVeR $1 MILLION PROVIDED BY INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTH TO HELP INCREASE ENROLLMENT AND DEVELOP FUTURE PROGRAMS
Weber State received a $2.78 million grant from the Department of Education for a teacher training program to help students who are not native English speakers thrive in school.

Professors Melina Alexander, David Byrd and Shernavaz Vakil in the Jerry & Vickie Moyes College of Education are leading the professional development efforts for teachers and administrators in public and charter schools throughout Utah.

The five-year grant will support up to 100 teachers and administrators. The first cohort of 25 educators started coursework during summer 2023.

Byrd said a significant achievement gap exists between English language learners, or ELLs, and their native-speaking peers.

“This grant aims to help Utah teachers provide ELLs the best possible foundation for educational success,” he said.

$2.78 MILLION GRANT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR AN ESL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

WSU STUDENTS ADVISE OGDEN CITY ON OGX PLANS

Weber State’s spring 2023 Advanced Urban Planning class studied the potential impact of four bus stations set to open along the new Ogden bus rapid transit line, named Ogden Express (OGX).

The class worked with the Utah Transit Authority to study stops along Harrison Boulevard at 25th, 28th, 32nd and 36th streets to determine what Ogden City should consider regarding access to opportunities, environmental conditions, affordable housing and transportation choices around the bus line.

Construction of the OGX allowed students to learn how to work as a team on a development project, said Bryan Dorsey, WSU’s Urban and Regional Planning Program coordinator. He added that the class regularly offers opportunities to work on real-world projects.

Reducing speed, adding traffic calming circles and a pedestrian bridge on Harrison Boulevard between 37th and 24th Streets were among the class’s suggestions.

The first leg of the OGX opened on the Weber State campus in fall 2022. The full route from Ogden’s FrontRunner station on Wall Avenue to McKay-Dee Hospital opened in August 2023.

HISTORIC GRANT SUPPORTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

LEFT: WSU graduate Amy Thomas, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, has seen the achievement gap between English language learners and peers first hand. TOP RIGHT: Allison Hess, former WSU public relations director, facilitates a panel to discuss reporting on elections for the VOTE Certification program. BOTTOM RIGHT: Utah State Correctional Facility students, taught by WSU professor Richard Greene, compete in an ethics bowl.
Ethics Bowl at the Utah State Correctional Facility

While Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl competitions place college students in ethical debates, the lessons they teach can also apply to those outside of higher education.

Recognizing an opportunity to teach students outside the university setting, Richard Greene, Weber State philosophy professor, and his wife, Rachel Robison-Greene, Utah State University philosophy assistant professor, volunteered to teach an ethics bowl course for female inmates at the Utah State Correctional Facility three years ago. The first course ended early due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the instructors restarted it for the spring 2023 semester.

As part of the University of Utah’s Prison Education Project, it ran eight weeks and ended with a competition against WSU and Utah State teams. The incarcerated students defeated the Utah State team in a unanimous decision, and lost to Weber State in a 2-1 decision.

The inmates enjoyed the course, and instructors plan to hold it again next spring.

Walker Institute helps keep elections free and fair

“All elections shall be free, and no power, civil or military, shall at any time interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage …”

— Article I, Section 17, Constitution of the State of Utah

The Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service VOTE Certification trains election officials to uphold Utah’s constitution through free and fair elections.

During the 2022–23 academic year, the institute hosted dozens of election officials from across the state at three sessions to learn how to properly run elections.

“The United States depends on elections as the foundation of the republic,” said Leah Murray, Walker Institute director. “We exist the way we do because we have elections.”

The institute has partnered with the Lieutenant Governor’s Office, the Utah State Legislature and national leaders for the certification since June 2021.
An app for saving lives

Weber and Morgan counties have a new tool to save cardiac arrest patients.

Bill Robertson, associate professor of emergency healthcare, partnered with Ogden City Fire Department Deputy Chief Michael Slater to bring the PulsePoint mobile app to the communities in spring 2023.

During a cardiac arrest, the app notifies emergency responders and nearby CPR-trained volunteers who can provide life-saving care until emergency responders arrive. The app also gives volunteers the location of nearby defibrillators. Robertson, along with the Dean’s Office of the Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions and others from the college, helped secure funds and training to launch the project.

Lighting the way to Weber State

Weber State’s Ogden campus has new lighted entryways on Harrison Boulevard. The lighted gateway columns were designed by VCBO Architects and built by YESCO in spring 2023. The statuesque, angular pieces stand out with prominent WSU logos, light features and stone bases at the 3950 South and 3850 South entrances. A similar project will be installed at WSU Davis in fall 2023.
I am very grateful to be part of something so beneficial and special. It’s a blessing to be able to pay it forward.”

— KOFI HERRICK

Student volunteer preps the meals he once relied on

Kofi Herrick recalls relying on packaged meals, called MannaPacks, every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner while growing up in a Ghanaian orphanage.

He was adopted by a family in Utah at age 14. Now, almost a decade later, he’s a member of Weber State’s soccer club and majors in child and family studies. But he hasn’t forgotten hungry kids around the world rely on the same MannaPacks.

Herrick recently helped coordinate a service project, where he and fellow students put together more than 100,000 MannaPacks. The meals they packaged are estimated to feed about 300 people for an entire year.

$1,098,561
ONGOING FUNDS
FROM THE UTAH LEGISLATURE WILL SUPPORT A NEW BACHELOR’S DEGREE AND GRADUATE CERTIFICATE

KEEPING UTAH’S WORKPLACES SAFE

This fall, Weber State will welcome the first cohorts for a new bachelor’s degree in Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety, and a graduate certificate in occupational health nursing.

The two fields of study are part of an innovative collaboration between Weber State, the University of Utah, and the Rocky Mountain Center for Environmental and Occupational Health.

The Utah Legislature funded the partnership during the 2022 and 2023 sessions.

NUMBER ONE IN BLOOD DONATIONS

American Red Cross representatives honored Weber State in June 2023 as the organization’s single largest blood sponsor covering Box Elder and Weber counties in 2022.

635 UNITS OF BLOOD
COLLECTED DURING THE YEAR

LEFT: Lighted gateway columns mark the entrances to WSU’s Ogden campus. RIGHT: Student volunteer Kofi Herrick prepped meals to pay it forward.
The WSU Spirit Squad leading the crowd in celebrating at the 2022 Homecoming Fan Fest & Tailgate
Achievements in Athletics
THREE NEW COACHES FOR
WSU ATHLETICS

Mickey Mental, the new head coach of Weber State’s football team, joined the Wildcats in 2022 as the offensive coordinator and helped lead Weber State to a 10-win season. He will continue to serve as the offensive coordinator in addition to his head coaching duties in the 2023 season.

As Weber State’s new head coach for men’s basketball, Eric Duft led the Wildcats to a 18-15 overall record and to the semifinals of the Big Sky Tournament in 2022–23. Duft previously coached more than 500 games over 16 years as an assistant and associate head coach for the team.

Jenteal Jackson, the latest addition to Weber State’s coaching staff, became head coach of the women’s basketball program in April 2023. Jackson is a Utah native and served as head coach at Westminster College in Salt Lake City from 2021–2023.

Wildcats excel in sports, classroom
MEN’S GOLF ACHIEVES A PERFECT APR SCORE

Wildcat student-athletes are brilliant on the field, on the court and in the classroom. The latest Division I Academic Progress Rate report, used to measure academic success by calculating the eligibility and retention of student-athletes, shows all 14* WSU athletics teams meeting or exceeding benchmarks implemented in 2003.

The WSU men’s golf team, which aims to keep its score low on the links, has a multiyear APR of 1,000, the highest score possible.

The APR system rewards superior academic performance and penalizes teams that don’t reach a minimum academic threshold. According to the NCAA, the higher standards are resulting in more student-athletes earning college degrees.

Adding to the academic accolades, the Big Sky Conference named the WSU women’s cross country and women’s tennis teams 2022–23 Team Academic Champions.

Many athletes received individual honors as well.

*While WSU sponsors 16 NCAA sports, NCAA standards require combining indoor and outdoor track and field into one women’s cohort and one men’s cohort for APR reporting.
SPIRIT SQUAD WINS SECOND GRAND CHAMPIONSHIP

The Weber State Spirit Squad are national champions once more. In spring 2023, the Wildcats competed at the 2023 NCA/NDA Collegiate Nationals. The cheer team won its seventh national title and its second Grand National Championship in the Large Coed Division competition. This is the sixth straight national title for the Wildcats.

The Large Coed team competed in Division IA, the highest division in the country, for the first time, finishing ahead of schools like Louisville, Texas Tech, Oklahoma State and Clemson to claim the title.

The Wildcats also placed second in the Advanced Small Coed Division I competition.

WSU also claimed a national title in partner stunt, with Elsa Hassett and Michael Androsov winning first. Wildcat stunt partners won five of the top six spots in the partner stunt category.

The dance team earned third place finishes in the Jazz and Hip Hop Division I competitions.

WSU Women’s Tennis pulls upset to win the Big Sky Championship

The Weber State women’s tennis team won its first Big Sky Championship title in over two decades in spring 2023. The team defeated top-seeded Northern Arizona University 4-2 in the championship final, and earned an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament in California.

Though defeated 4-0 in the first round of the NCAA tournament against Stanford, the team ended the season with more accolades. Head Coach RuthAnn Allen was named the 2023 Big Sky Women’s Tennis Coach of the Year for the second year in a row. Senior Ana Morett was named the Big Sky’s Most Valuable Player, becoming the first Weber State women’s tennis player to be named MVP since 2001.

SEASON RECORDS

2022–23

12-9 OVERALL SEASON

6-1 BIG SKY CONFERENCE