

Justen Smith Named Vice President of USU Extension

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USU Extension

Vice President Justen Smith

After a nationwide search, Utah State University President Brad Mortensen named Justen Smith vice president of USU Extension. Smith has served as interim vice president since March and, prior to that, as department head of the USU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Department for nine years. He has worked as an Extension professional for 27 years.

"Justen understands both the history and the potential of USU Extension," Mortensen said. "He has worked at county, regional, and statewide levels, and he knows that our responsibility is not simply to preserve what Extension has been, but to continually ask what Utah needs from its land-grant university today and into the future, and how we can work together to meet those needs."

Throughout his career, Smith has secured more than \$11 million in grants and external funding to support Extension initiatives and agricultural development. He also led the effort to secure \$1.2 million to construct the USU Extension building in Davis County, creating a dedicated space for agricultural education and outreach.



Justen Smith hiking

summit of Mt. Makiling, Philippines.

"I am humbled and honored that President Mortensen and the USU Board of Trustees have entrusted me to lead this incredible 112-year-old organization," Smith said. "Extension has been my life for nearly three decades, and I have had the privilege of working in every aspect of it, starting as a county agriculture faculty member in Tooele County, then an area livestock and rangeland faculty for Washington State University, a 4-H and agriculture faculty in Davis County, then as the Extension agriculture and natural resources director."

Smith said he deeply values the land-grant university mission, which extends USU research and resources to every county in Utah. USU Extension provides research-based education and assistance in agriculture, natural resources, 4-H youth development, and all aspects of home and community. He said one of his goals is to increase awareness and understanding of Extension so Utahns can benefit from its many programs.

"USU Extension literally extends the tremendous resources of USU to Utahns to support them and help provide solutions to their challenges – including water, rural economic development, agriculture, food preservation, mental health, relationships, food insecurity, horticulture, natural resources, finances, and youth development," he said. "Our programs continue to show measurable impacts and economic return on investment. In addition, our amazing statewide Extension faculty and staff are valuable assets to Utah, and I consider USU Extension to be a national model."

Throughout his career, Smith has led initiatives focused on water conservation, agricultural development, and community engagement. He led the creation of the [drought.usu.edu website](https://drought.usu.edu), which provides resources on

agricultural water optimization and water conservation for Utah, the nation's second-driest state. He also partnered with Davis County commissioners to develop and construct the Davis Agricultural Heritage Center in Kaysville. The center honors Davis County and Utah's agricultural heritage and includes an indoor and outdoor arena and 74 stalls. It hosts events such as 4-H youth livestock and horse shows.

In addition, Smith has worked in 24 countries across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and beyond, providing technical assistance to farmers and agricultural organizations. His work with USDA, USAID, and multiple international organizations has helped improve livestock production, enhance food security, and develop sustainable agricultural practices in diverse regions.

"USU Extension is uniquely positioned to help address Utah's most pressing challenges by connecting university expertise with the needs of people and communities across the state," Smith said. "I am excited to help lead that work and look forward to our continued partnerships with elected officials, industry leaders, academic colleagues, and local communities to ensure that Extension remains a trusted resource for generations to come."

For further information about individual county offices and Extension programs, [visit extension.usu.edu](https://extension.usu.edu).

Writers and Contacts

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