

Women Leaders in Utah Higher Education on the Rise

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New research from the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP), in conjunction with Utah State University Extension, Utah Valley University and Dixie State University, provides an update to previous UWLP studies on the status of women leaders in Utah education. The 2021 research focuses on women in higher education. Previous research was conducted in 2014 and 2017 and focused on women's leadership in K-12 and post-secondary education across the state.

The recent study was conducted to determine the progress made in women's leadership in Utah's public higher education institutions and the two largest private institutions. Also included were technical colleges, which were combined with the Utah System of Higher Education in July 2020 to form the Utah Board of Higher Education.

The most dramatic change over the seven-year span of the study was in the number of women university presidents in Utah, going from 12.5% in 2014, to 25% in 2017, to 50% in 2021. When comparing all Utah institutions to the national average of women in higher education positions, Utah was the same nationally for presidents at 33%, but slightly or somewhat lower for other positions such as president's cabinet member, provost, vice president and dean. The most significant disparity was in associate or assistant vice president positions, with Utah at 37% and the national average at 53%.

In 2020, Inside Higher Ed reported that although the number of women in administration was rising, they still faced significant seniority and pay disparities. A 2017 ACE Pipeline Report noted that women earn more than half the

doctorate degrees across the U.S. and are more prepared than ever to lead. Yet at every rank and in every institution type, except two-year private institutions, men were paid more than women by \$13,874 at public institutions and \$18,201 at private institutions.

Susan Madsen, founding director of the UWLP, Karen Huntsman Endowed Professor of Leadership in USU's Huntsman School of Business, and co-author for the study, said the research shows that people do not fully realize the value of having women in key leadership positions in higher education, even though it is vital.

"Research findings continue to show that diverse and inclusive leadership teams produce more creative, innovative, productive and effective results," she said. "More colleges and universities are setting goals to improve their organization's performance through increased diversity, and gender diversity is a very key part of that."

Madsen said higher education institutions in Utah and across the U.S. will continue to face challenges, and strong, capable women leaders are needed to help meet these challenges.

"We are seeing that women's diverse leadership styles and their focus on inclusiveness and cooperation have helped forge new pathways to better decision making," she said. "Normalizing women as leaders provides diverse role models for faculty, staff and students. Overall, the news from this research is good. We have made substantial progress since 2014 on women's leadership in higher education."

Additional authors for the study include Nancy E. Hauck, associate provost, Dixie State University; Jessica C. Hill, associate professor, Utah Valley University; and April Townsend, scholar-in-residence, UWLP.

Click here to see the complete research study or visit <https://tinyurl.com/4hf8rsw9>. For further information on the UWLP, visit utwomen.org.

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