

TAYLOR R. RANDALL
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Re-Imagine U: Inspire, Innovate, and Impact

Prepared remarks for
the University of Utah's
17th Presidential Inauguration,
March 23, 2022

Taylor R. Randall,
President of the University of Utah

I want to begin today by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the 17th president of the University of Utah. It is an honor to serve an institution that has meant so much to me and my family over multiple generations.

Thank you to the Board of Trustees for entrusting me with this responsibility. Thank you to our State Legislature and members of their leadership for prioritizing education in the state of Utah. Thank you Commissioner Woolstenhulme, Chair Harris Simmons, and Governor Cox for your kind words. Thank you to my dear friend and mentor Karl Ulrich for taking a chance on me as a PhD student many years ago. Thank you to the U's incredible chamber choir.

I inherit an institution poised for remarkable success. We are all benefactors of the culmination of wise decisions made by my predecessors, most recently President Ruth Watkins and President David Pershing. I also want to thank

President Michael Young for the opportunity he gave me to enter educational administration as dean of the David Eccles School of Business almost 13 years ago.

I owe immense appreciation to the generosity of our philanthropic supporters, many in this auditorium today. You've put your trust in this university and helped us exceed our goals. The institution would not be where it is today without your unwavering support. You are our margin of excellence.





For a moment, I would like to reflect on yesterday's inaugural Day of Collective Action at the U. We came together to take an active stance against bias, hate, and discrimination. The event was one of many actions we are taking to ensure that equity and inclusion are foundational to everything we do. Thank you to all who participated and for your commitment to this vital and ongoing work.

I also want to acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has not been easy on any of us. Please join me in thanking all of the individuals in our community—especially our health care workers—who have worked tirelessly and inspired us through difficult times.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my family. My parents, Reed and Marilyn—thank you for 55 years of believing in my dreams. To Janet, my wife—thank you for taking this leap with me. To Spencer, Emily, Olivia, Jacob, Clara, and Lilly—thank you for listening to a dad who has a lot of wild ideas about the world and loves to discuss them over dinner.



“Imagine is one of the most powerful and evocative words in the English language.”



TRIBUTE TO UKRAINE

Twenty-seven days ago, Russia's president launched a brutal invasion of Ukraine. An estimated 3.4 million Ukrainians have left everything they love and have worked so hard to build. They are now refugees. The people of Russia are also suffering due to the abhorrent actions of their leader, as serious sanctions have been imposed.

As a university family, we grieve for all who are impacted by this invasion and war, the likes of which we haven't seen on the European continent in decades. We have Ukrainian and Russian

students, staff, and faculty. We have alumni from these countries. Together we mourn and pray for peace.

RE-IMAGINE U

At the University of Utah, we have a philosophy of: Imagine, then do. It's why we call it Imagine U. Today, I want to tell you what that means to me, and how it will shape my leadership.

Imagine is one of the most powerful and evocative words in the English language. Why? Because it evokes something personal and aspirational to everyone who hears it and follows its call... a call to become our best versions of ourselves; a call to ensure that everyone feels a sense of belonging; a call to be a part of something larger than ourselves; a call to make the world a better place.

In this auditorium today, there are hundreds of different versions of "imagine." Think about what yours is. Our students, all 34,424 of them, each have different versions of "imagine." Our faculty and staff, all 35,000 of them, each have unique versions of "imagine."

Step 1: **IMAGINE**
Step 2: **DO**



This year, Sabah Sial, a senior majoring in finance, was named the first Rhodes Scholar our institution has seen in 20 years. Imagine that. Sabah's story begins with the imagination of her parents. Sabah's father came to America from Pakistan. He forged a career in Utah as an entrepreneur. He imagined a life for his family in our country and made it happen. Sabah's mother, who holds a doctoral degree, put her career on hold to help educate her children in hopes that they too could attend college someday. I have often heard Sabah speak of the sacrifice of her mother. Our job at the University of Utah is to help students and families like Sabah's achieve what they imagine.

When I was selected on August 5, 2021, to lead this university, I asked myself the question: How do I imagine, and then do? When we imagine, we forget—just for a moment—the boundaries that constrain our thinking. Once we remove the boundaries, we can “Re-imagine U.”

When I re-imagine something, I see a future that is so inspiring, so innovative, and



“Why **re-imagine U** now? The University of Utah faces an unprecedented era of opportunity.”



so impactful that it unifies people behind a common, aspirational ideal. I instinctively think about a future that is better than the present. This exercise creates a powerful cascade of ideas, grounded in inspiration, innovation, and impact. We start to see a future that inspires, a future that innovates, and a future with impact.

Why re-imagine U now? The University of Utah faces an unprecedented era of opportunity. We are located in the nation’s fastest-growing state. Utah is growing in cultural diversity and changing demographics. We have the nation’s fastest-growing economy. We are at the center of the nation’s most vibrant economic region, the interior western United States. We are not on the periphery, we are at the very center. We must continue to position the U to be at the heart of it all—while also prioritizing our commitment to the foundational principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion; safety; health and well-being; academic freedom; and sustainability.

We want this campus to be 1,534 acres of “you can achieve anything here.” This includes providing our students with access to a broad liberal

education—including the importance of studying fine arts, social sciences, and humanities. All of this opportunity culminates in our vision to become a top 10 public university with unsurpassed societal impact. To achieve this vision, we must use our imagination to inspire, innovate, and impact.

INSPIRE

The first “i” of the vision is “inspire.” I want to re-imagine how we inspire our students. How can we revolutionize their student experience? Why is this necessary? Because students arriving on campus today are very different from the students of even 10 years ago.

They learn and see the world differently. They are natives of digital and social media

**INSPIRE
INNOVATE
IMPACT**

environments. They have lived through historic moments like 9/11, the Great Recession, the social justice movement fueled by the murder of George Floyd and several other Black citizens, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic. They are now challenged by a war in Ukraine and existential issues like climate change and its collateral impacts. These are all serious issues. Perhaps this is why they approach their education very



deliberately. And why they envision a future unfettered by the structures and obstacles of prior generations.

How do we re-imagine an education and a future for this generation of students? By creating an optimism that allows them to use their imagination to transform their future. Let's think of campus as more than a classroom, but rather an experience, a playground where anything is possible. This begins by literally building a campus that integrates learning, living, and the world around them.

I'm pleased to introduce a 775-bed educational experience called the Impact and Prosperity Epicenter, generously funded by the Sorenson and Gay families. Located near the Eccles Student Life Center, this housing and educational concept was developed based on the Lassonde Studios, our highly successful living-learning facility with an entrepreneurial focus.

The Epicenter will have two research centers co-located within—the Sorenson Impact Center and the Center for Business, Health, and Prosperity. The co-location of these activities will provide opportunities for students to find innovative solutions to today's social issues. The Epicenter will help make the University of Utah a destination campus—a college town in itself, if you will. It will also help dispel the perception of the U as a commuter campus and help create an even stronger sense of community and belonging for all.

This revolution will come not only in our buildings but also as our freshmen walk in the front door. For students who are making a choice between attending the U or another school, we want there



“We want prospective students to immediately have **FOMO** (fear of missing out) after learning about the fabulous freshman experiences”



to be no comparison. How will we do that? We will capitalize on what differentiates us from any other school in the state: our research expertise. We will put students right at the forefront of knowledge creation beginning on day one.

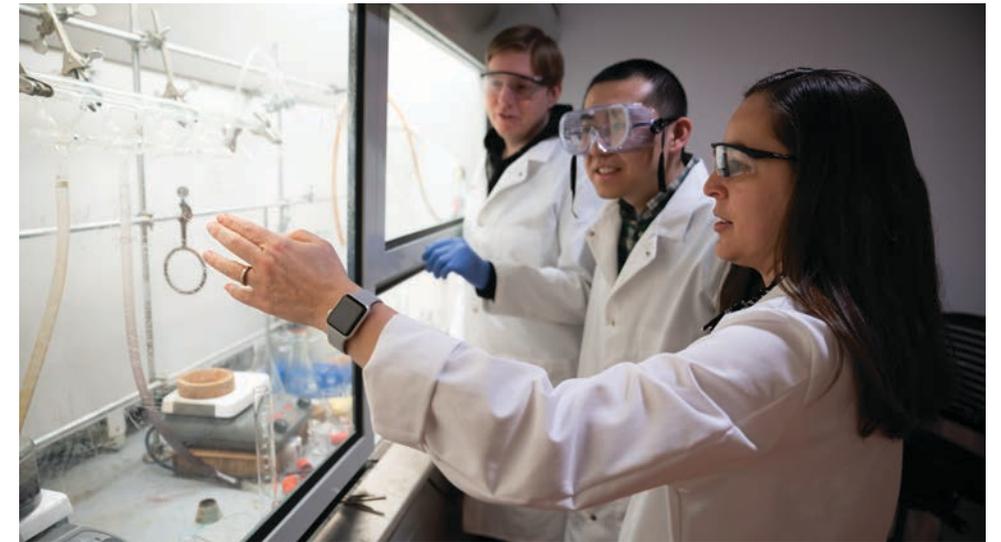
Imagine 500 newly admitted freshmen spending time in a lab working with molecules that will change cancer treatment or help us combat air pollution. Imagine freshmen students traveling to our campus in Korea, getting hands-on experience in urban ecology; or assisting with economic development projects in Ghana; or learning great literature and architecture through our London Global U partnership.

We want prospective students to immediately have FOMO (fear of missing out) after learning about the fabulous freshman experiences we provide at the U. We want prospective students to be so afraid of missing out that they will stand in line to come here—and we want to do this at scale. We want 80 percent of our freshmen to have these experiences. And then after their first year, rinse and repeat.

We have a new name for this vision: Utah Fresh. It is a student experience that is refreshingly different. New experiences will be launched this fall for students interested in science, engineering, business, the arts and humanities, and social impact. Only at the University of Utah.

INNOVATE

Now, let's talk about the second “i” that is essential to re-imagining the U. I want to re-imagine and accelerate how we innovate. Why? As some scholars have pointed out, the enterprise of higher education has progressed through two major evolutions and is now entering a third. The first evolution was reading,



writing, and arithmetic; the second evolution was the research enterprise; and the third evolution, which we are just beginning, is entrepreneurship. This is where we take the learning and knowledge enterprise beyond campus to improve lives and change the world.

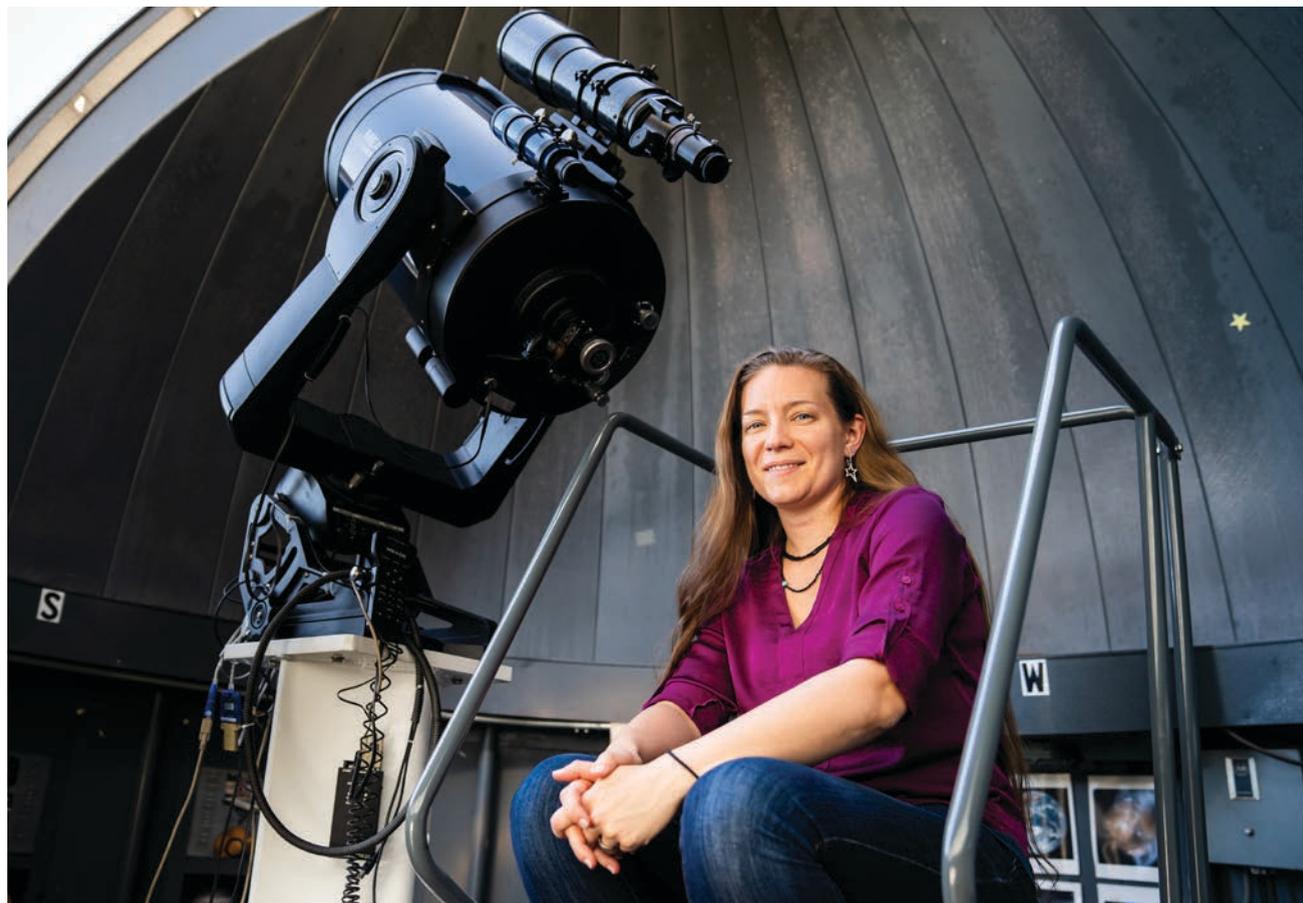
Utah's place in the world and in the nation is made relevant by how useful we are to society.



In 1945, the U's first National Institutes of Health grant was given to Max Wintrobe, one of the world's foremost hematologists to study both muscular dystrophy and inherited diseases of the blood. In 1969, we became the fourth node of the ARPANET, which evolved into the Internet. The pixel was made popular by scientists from the U: Atari, Adobe, and Pixar were all founded

by Utah-trained individuals. In 1982, we performed the world's first artificial heart transplant surgery on a 61-year-old patient named Barney Clark. In addition, researchers at the U have discovered many of the most significant cancer-causing genes, including some of the genes that cause breast, colon, and skin cancer.





These are all groundbreaking achievements, but we are now poised to leverage our talent and resources to usher in the third evolution at the U. This is where our faculty and researchers will be inspired to play a vital role. As I look at our research agenda, I have two main “re-imaginings,” if you will.

First, we need to do more research. To make this a reality, the University of Utah must secure and sustain \$1 billion of research funding annually within seven years. This research must be closely tied to the major knowledge challenges of our day. We need to see if the path-breaking work by Eric Garland can help solve the opioid crisis. We hope that Michelle Litchman’s research on diabetes results in significant policy changes. We want to see even more of Florian Solzbacher’s research on the brain-computer interface implemented in Blackrock Neurotech.

Second, our research needs to hit markets more quickly. I call this picking up our “clock speed” by increasing the velocity of our engagement to speed up transfer. We will do this by investing



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\$100 million in what we call “greenhouses” to increase the translation of basic research into commercially useful output. Examples of greenhouse research will include therapeutics, orthopedics, clean energy, and financial and regulatory technology, and social policy innovation.

IMPACT

Now I want to turn to the third “i” in my vision for the U: impact. Throughout its history, the University of Utah has served as a thought center and gathering space for the community around us. That’s why the state arboretum (Red Butte Garden), the Natural History Museum of Utah, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, UtahPresents, Pioneer Theatre Company (and the origin soil of the Utah Symphony, Utah Opera, Ballet West, and more) all call our campus home.

Now, we want to embed the U even deeper into the community we serve. We want to cultivate community connections, build trust, uproot injustices, and transform the future of this amazing state we live in. To accomplish this, the U will extend its impact even farther beyond

the hill it sits upon. We must impact the lives of all 3.3 million Utahns and have a presence in all 29 Utah counties.

Traditionally, research universities have focused on teaching their students from the academic inquiry conducted on their campuses. We want to flip that tradition on its head by converting faculty research into action. We plan to infuse interdisciplinary research that goes beyond STEM—research that includes the humanities, arts, education, social work, nursing, and so on. To turn research solutions into community action, we need to rewrite the compact that the University of Utah has with the community around us.

So, today, I am pleased to announce

the formation of the Presidential Public Impact Scholars and accompanying awards. These scholars will be experts in their respective fields, skilled at translating their scholarship to audiences outside the university in ways that will transform society. Their work will have a positive impact on people and institutions and will help make our world a better, more equitable and enjoyable place.



This is a very exciting opportunity for our faculty. But this is not the only way we plan to make an impact on the citizens of our state. As many of you know, for 20 years, University Neighborhood Partners has been at the forefront of working on real-life solutions for west Salt Lake City neighborhoods—with education, job training, childcare, and other services.

We are going to amplify that model through our new campuses in Herriman and West Valley City. Over the next 10 years, we expect

to grow our student body to 40,000 through increased online education offerings, certificates, and micro master's degrees. A key part of that growth is meeting students where they are, helping them get a broad but practical education that will prepare them for the workforce of tomorrow. Our campuses in Herriman and West Valley City will do just that.

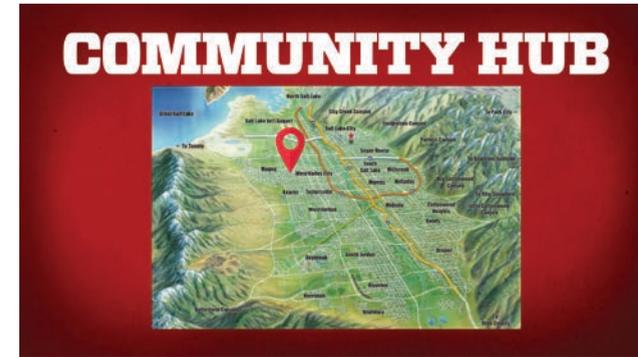
In 2023, Salt Lake Community College and the U will open a joint 90-acre campus in Herriman. By 2025, the Herriman campus will

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be home to 7,000 students earning associate degrees from SLCC and bachelor’s degrees from the U—all in one location.

In West Valley City, we will invest \$500 million to build a community hub that will include a hospital and clinics, classrooms, childcare facilities, and more. This center in the heart of Utah’s only minority-majority city will not only provide care for the community’s health needs, but also create jobs and provide pathways to education and training. In addition to hiring 1,500 employees to work at the complex, we will engage them and their family members in job training, high school and university courses, wellness activities, and more. This vision for statewide impact is a true partnership.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

It has been 50 years since a U alum has been president of this university; I am honored to represent my alumni peers in this role. I’m also a third-generation professor at this university, following in the footsteps of my father and grandfather.



In 1930, my grandfather Clyde Randall decided that his job opportunities were limited at the cannery where he worked in northern Utah. He saw the University of Utah as a place where he could achieve the promise of higher education, a place where he could lift his life and the lives of his children and grandchildren. His plan worked. I've witnessed the power of what higher education can do over multiple generations. And I've observed the power of what the University of Utah can do for individuals and families, including my own.

By becoming a top 10 public university with unsurpassed societal impact, we will inspire a new generation of students, find newer and faster ways to innovate, improve and touch the lives of every Utahn—and in so doing change the world around us.

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Thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility.



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IMAGINE



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