

USU Welcomes New Director of Nursing Programs | CEHS

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Utah State University's Department of Nursing and Health Professions welcomes Laura Dotson, MSN, RN, from USU Eastern as the new director of Practical and Associate Degree Nursing Programs. Prior to her new appointment, Dotson was the nursing program coordinator at USU Eastern.

Dotson's nursing career began in 1993 at the College of Eastern Utah. She earned her practical nursing training there, and then in 1995, she earned her associate degree in nursing. After working in nursing for many years, Dotson went on to earn a master's degree in nursing education from the Chamberlain College of Nursing in St. Louis, Missouri. She joined USU in 2012 as program coordinator, facilitating both didactic and clinical training for two cohorts, supervising faculty, staff, and adjuncts, building community relationships, monitoring the program budget, and mentoring students.

In 2017, Dotson was chosen to go with the USU Study Abroad Program to Honduras to assess its potential benefits for the nursing program. "It was an impactful experience and one I believe every college student would benefit and grow from," said Dotson.

"Laura has done a wonderful job helping our nursing program grow in size and ensuring students get a quality education that translates into passing the state licensure exam," said Carole Grady, Dotson's predecessor and former director of USU's nursing programs. "She is easy to work with and someone we can always depend on to accomplish difficult projects."

Dotson praised Grady for the remarkable things she accomplished as the director, at a time when there were many challenges to overcome. "Carole faced those

challenges with unwavering strength, compassion, empathy, and equanimity, enabling the program to reach those goals in the three years she has been the director," said Dotson. "She helped develop and launch the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in Logan, as well as expanding our regional campuses to include Tooele, Moab, and Cedar City. She insisted on faculty involvement through every step of our ACEN accreditation, and this provided a vested interest and accountability for the future of the program and the tools to maintain it."

When asked about the challenges of her professional career, Dotson explained that because the field is expanding so rapidly, "it can be difficult to stay up-to-date on all the changes and medical advances in health care. I have learned to accept that I can't teach the students everything. The majority of their learning will come from working in the field and their experiences as a nurse. My job is to make sure they have a good foundation to build on."

This foundation has allowed USU's Practical Nursing (PN) Certificate and associate in nursing programs to flourish, and it is this same dedication to the fundamentals of nursing that will continue to enhance USU's nursing program. More students are entering the field, and with leadership like Dotson's, they graduate ready to find success in their own careers. As the director, Dotson will remain in Price but will have administrative responsibility for PN programs in Price, Moab, and Blanding, and associate degree programs in Price, Moab, Blanding, Uintah Basin, Tooele, and Cedar City. The Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services is excited to welcome her in this new position.