

# Dean's Leadership Fellows Announced for 2026-27 Academic Year

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Dean's Leadership Fellows 2026-27: Rami Shaaban, Kristy Bloxham, and Nate Trauntvein

The Dean's Leadership Fellows for the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services (CEHS) have been announced for academic year 2026-27. Introduced last year, the Dean's Leadership Fellows program provides participants with insight into the college's administrative and operational structure while helping them develop leadership skills and values. Fellows are mentored by college leaders, engage with peers, complete leadership-focused assignments, and apply their skills through a capstone project that benefits the college. The program is made possible through resources provided by the Emma Eccles Jones Foundation.

"Our administrative team is excited to support these budding leaders within our College and to watch their projects evolve over the coming year," said Endowed Dean Alan Smith. "Leadership Fellows help strengthen cross-college connection and meaningfully build upon our student, staff, and faculty success efforts. I am grateful for their commitment to our College goals and look forward to working with them."

## Kristy Bloxham: Alumni Student Mentoring Program

Kristy Bloxham, professional practice professor in the Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences (ITLS), is piloting an alumni student mentoring program. The program will connect undergraduate seniors and graduate students with alumni mentors through one-on-one partnerships that last the full academic

year. It will include a recruitment and matching process, structured check-ins, and a scalable framework that can be implemented across departments.

"I was inspired by seeing the power of alumni connections in the ITLS department," Bloxham explained. "Our alumni have been remarkably generous in giving back to USU, which has helped students prepare for their careers, land jobs and internships, and build professional confidence. I've also seen how re-engaging with alumni helps them feel connected to our program. I want to bring that same energy to the broader college."

Bloxham's first steps involve recruiting alumni mentors and opening applications for students interested in the program. From there, she will pair mentors and mentees and establish a simple structure for check-ins to support each partnership throughout the academic year.

Looking ahead, Bloxham said she hopes this program will create a lasting connection between CEHS students and the alumni community. "For students, I want the program to open doors to careers, networks, and the real-world guidance that makes a difference in those early professional years. For alumni, I hope it offers a genuine way to stay connected to USU and to invest in the next generation of graduates."

## Ramy Shaaban: Human-Centered AI Workforce Readiness Initiative

Ramy Shaaban, professional practice associate professor in the ITLS department, is starting an AI workforce readiness initiative. The project will include a professional development workshop series for faculty members, which will help them integrate AI into their teaching. The second part of the project is to create a student certificate in AI applications, allowing undergraduates to gain practical AI skills relevant to their profession.

Shaaban said his inspiration came from his background in medicine and instructional technology as well as working in the Human Experience Design and Interaction program, where he serves as a Bachelor of Science program coordinator. His project is also closely aligned with the Utah System of Higher Education's new resolution to equip college students with pro-human AI workforce skills.

"Through my experience, I kept seeing the same gap—our students are entering professions that increasingly demand AI literacy, but we don't have a systematic, college-wide way to prepare them," Shaaban shared. "This fellowship is an opportunity to build that infrastructure

across our eight departments rather than leaving it to individual faculty to figure out on their own.”

Shaaban is beginning to build the infrastructure for this initiative by creating a student certificate program, designing workshops for faculty, and consulting department heads to identify AI skills their students need.

“I want our students to graduate as AI natives—professionals who are fluent in using AI thoughtfully and ethically in their fields,” Shaaban said. “Beyond the students, I hope the faculty workshops create a lasting culture shift where AI integration becomes part of how we teach across the college. If we do this well, CEHS can be a regional leader in AI workforce readiness.”

## **Nate Trauntvein: Instructor Support, Teaching Excellence, and Workforce Readiness**

Nate Trauntvein, associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Science, is developing a project aimed to support CEHS faculty who are not full-time—including adjunct faculty, graduate instructors, and other professionals—through online training modules, structured onboarding, and ongoing support.

“A lot of our programs rely heavily on these instructors who bring incredible professional experience into the classroom, but the systems we have in place to support them are often inconsistent, which impacts the instructors and students,” Trauntvein explained. “This project is about strengthening that bridge by helping instructors feel more prepared, connected, and supported, which ultimately improves the student experience.”

This summer, Trauntvein will begin meeting with department heads and program directors and gathering feedback from instructors through surveys and interviews. He said the goal is to understand what’s working well, identify gaps, and find ways to enhance support for non-full-time instructors.

“I hope this project helps these instructors succeed by supporting stronger teaching, better student results, and a greater sense of belonging within CEHS,” Trauntvein shared. “If we build a system that is both supportive and sustainable, it can ease the workload for departments and improve the experience for everyone.”