USU Tooele Welcomes First-Ever Success Coordinator, New Faculty in Education and Math | Tooele

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Utah State University Tooele announces the addition of two faculty members as well as a new staff member. Melissa Kroff Lawrence who has been with USU Tooele since 2014 is now the campus’s first-ever student success coordinator. Hilary Tanck has been hired as a professional practice assistant professor in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, while Paul Mickelson has been hired as a lecturer in Mathematics and Statistics in the College of Science.

“We are so excited to have a full team ready for the fall,” said Jennifer Cowburn, associate vice president for USU Tooele.

MELISSA KROFF LAWRENCE

Lawrence returns to her roots, coming back to her alma mater as the campus’s first-ever student success coordinator. She graduated from Tooele High School and received both her associate and bachelor's in natural resource management from USU Tooele. Lawrence was a post traditional student, starting her college experience when she turned 40. As she worked on her degrees, she held several positions at the campus, as part-time facilitator, a proctor in the testing center and finally as the testing center coordinator. She was then transitioned into this new role.

“Think of me as a liaison, concierge Google for all student resources and services,” she said. “I interact with students and provide them with motivation on a variety of matters including registering for classes and applying for scholarships. I also will periodically check on students’ academic progress and provide unlimited amounts of encouragement and a listening ear.”

Lawrence also will work with the USU Tooele faculty, assisting to set up programs, such as the Faculty-to-Student Mentor program. She looks forward to the impact she can makes in students’ lives.

“I get to work with USU students and empower them with resources available to them here at USU Tooele to change their lives,” she said.

Being a student at the campus herself, Lawrence was qualified for the new position and brings a passion for the campus for which she works. She hopes to help students succeed, just as she has herself.

“There is no doubt that our USU Tooele students will benefit from Melissa serving as our first student success coordinator,” said Director of Students Sonja Jensen. “As a USU Tooele graduate herself, Melissa understands the pressure and stress our students encounter working towards their degree. I’m excited to see how her skills and talents will strengthen the experience and opportunities for our students.

Lawrence is currently working on her master’s at USU Tooele, this time in instructional technology and learning sciences. In her spare time, she loves to hike Utah and the bordering states, go road tripping and spend time with her teenage son.

HILARY TANCK

Tanck joins the School of Teacher Education and Leadership after a seven-year stint as a middle school math teacher in Kansas City, Mo. She earned her bachelor’s in middle school education from Southwest Baptist University. Tanck went on to receive her master’s in education theory and practice from Arkansas State, then earned her doctorate in curriculum and instruction mathematics education from Clemson University.

“Hilary brings back elementary education faculty to Tooele,” said Cowburn. “She has a love of all things learning and we are lucky to have her on campus.”

Tanck was initially drawn to the state of Utah because of its outdoor recreation possibilities and beautiful scenery
but was convinced to stay because of the people she would be working with and the excitement she saw in the position.

“After meeting the faculty, staff and students during the interview process, I knew I wanted to be a part of the community at USU Tooele,” Tanck said. “I like the smaller feel of the Tooele campus with access to incredible resources.”

Tanck is excited to start in her position, seeing the opportunities USU provides for students.

“It’s unique that USU offers degree opportunities to students across Utah,” she said. “It’s awesome both pre-service and in-service teachers have access to quality degree opportunities in the communities where they will teach.”

Tanck is an outdoor junkie, finding enjoyment in hiking, whitewater kayaking, biking, as well as travel.

PAUL MICKELSON

Mickelson joins the Department of Mathematics & Statistics with more than 10 years of experience tutoring and teaching mathematics courses, both teaching students as well as training fellow tutors. He managed the walk-in mathematics tutoring center at Yuba College and taught algebra through Brigham Young University-Idaho.

“Paul is an expert in math education and a master at helping students who don’t think they like the subject to excel,” Cowburn said. “He lives for those light bulb moments when a student grasps the concept he is teaching.”

Mickelson thrives in helping students find confidence in their math abilities. While he knows the subject is not always a favorite among students, he enjoys showing students how fun math can be.

“I have a passion for math, data analysis and engineering,” Mickelson said. “I’m excited to bring that passion to USU Tooele as an instructor and share my knowledge with the students. It really makes my day helping students gain confidence in their math ability and to be able to break down their fears. I love math and I love showing students how much fun it can be.”

Mickelson holds a bachelor’s in mechanical engineering from BYU-Idaho and a master’s in applied mathematics from the University of Washington. He has held several non-teaching positions during his working career, including a machine operator, city bus driver and a cast member at Walt Disney World. He met his wife while working for Disney, as she was also a cast member.

For more information on USU Tooele and its degree programs, visit https://statewide.usu.edu/tooele/.

Melissa Kroff Lawrence is serving as USU Tooele’s first student success coordinator.
Hilary Tanck has joined USU Tooele’s faculty as a professional practice assistant professor.

Paul Mickelson comes onboard to serve as lecturer in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

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