Utah State

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October 23, 2003

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY ACCEPTS WESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE INVITATION

LOGAN, Utah -- Utah State University has accepted an invitation for its athletics teams to become members of the Western Athletic Conference it was announced on Thursday by University President Dr. Kermit L. Hall and Director of Athletics Rance Pugmire. The invitation was extended by the chair of the WAC Board of Directors and University of Texas at El Paso President Dr. Diana Natalicio and WAC Commissioner Karl Benson after the Board unanimously voted to issue the invitations Thursday morning.

New Mexico State University was also issued an invitation to join the Western Athletic Conference and accepted that invitation on Thursday. Both USU and NMSU will begin competing in the league in 2005-06 with the exception of USU's women's gymnastics program, which will continue to compete in the Western Gymnastics Conference.

Until 2005-06, USU's teams will continue to compete in their respective conferences (football in the Sun Belt Conference, gymnastics in the Western Gymnastics Conference, indoor track and field in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation and the remainder of its sports in the Big West Conference).

The Western Athletic Conference, which is based in Englewood, Colo. (a suburb of Denver), current membership includes Boise State University, Fresno State University, University of Hawai'i, Louisiana Tech University, University of Nevada, Rice University, San Jose State University, Southern Methodist University, University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of Tulsa. Rice, SMU and Tulsa are expected to become members of Conference USA beginning in 2005-06.

Utah State fields teams in 16 different sports including seven men's sports of basketball, cross country, football, golf, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field, and tennis and nine women's sports of basketball, cross country, gymnastics, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field, soccer, softball, tennis, and volleyball.

The Western Athletic Conference sponsors all of those sports except gymnastics as well as sponsoring baseball, women's golf and women's swimming and diving.

"This action represents a significant step forward for Utah State athletics and for greater visibility of the University as a whole," Hall said. "It holds a promise for greater regional rivalries and traditions and academic excellence, which will serve Utah State well into the future."

"I am thrilled for our programs, but more importantly I am thrilled for our fans, who have stayed with us year after year," Pugmire said. "They have been waiting for this day for a very long time."

Utah State and New Mexico State will be able to continue their longtime rivalry as both Aggies were members of the Big West Conference together from 1984-2000 and then were reunited in in the Sun Belt Conference in 2003. The two programs will be meeting for the 28th time on the football field on Nov. 6, while the basketball teams have clashed 46 times.

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USU
2-2-2

USU has been a longtime member of the Big West Conference competing in that league since 1978. The league stopped sponsoring football after the 2000 season and the Aggies competed as an independent in football in 2001 and 2002 before entering their first year in the Sun Belt Conference this fall. USU's other sports programs have continued to compete in the Big West Conference, with two exceptions in indoor track and field (Mountain Pacific Sports Federation) and gymnastics (Western Gymnastics Championship). The league never sponsored indoor track and field and stopped sponsoring gymnastics after 2001.

In its 26 years of Big West Conference membership, Utah State has produced 36 conference team championships, including five in football. In the last nine years USU has won 23 league titles in seven different sports, including four in basketball, two in men's cross country, two in football, six in men's outdoor track, one in women's cross country, three in gymnastics, and five in women's track.

USU's success has not been limited to the playing fields as the Aggies have annually been among the conference leaders in academic all-conference selections and once again last year produced a conference-best 66 academic all-Big West selections and 106 overall, including gymnastics and indoor track.

Utah State has been a division I-A football playing school in each of its 105 seasons of competition. USU joined the Mountain States Conference in 1938, which evolved into the Skyline Conference until 1961. USU played as a football independent from 1962-77 when the Aggies became members of the Pacific Coast Athletic Association, which changed its name to the Big West Conference in 1988. USU became the first non-California member of the conference when it was granted PCAA membership on Sept. 10, 1977.

USU's basketball team played in the Rocky Mountain Conference from 1918-1937 and the Mountain States Conference from 1938-62 before playing as an independent until joining the PCAA/Big West in 1979.

Utah State University Quick Facts

Location: Logan, Utah
Founded: 1888
Enrollment: 21,490
President: Dr. Kermit L. Hall (Akron, 1966)
Director of Athletics: Rance Pugmire (Idaho, 1987)
Nickname: Aggies
Colors: Navy Blue and White

Website: www.UtahStateAggies.com

What Others Are Saying

Karl Benson, Western Athletic Conference Commissioner

"Both New Mexico State and Utah State have outstanding athletic programs and facilities that will add to the foundation of the WAC. The current teams and fans in the WAC are already familiar with these new additions as these schools already have developed rivalries within the conference."

Dr. Diana Natalicio, University of Texas at El Paso President

"The Board of Directors is extremely dedicated to the long-term stability and growth of the Western Athletic Conference. These two exceptional universities will support the WAC in its goals to excel in all aspects of collegiate athletics."

Mick Dennehy, USU Head Football Coach

"We are very appreciative of the opportunities that we have had in the Sun Belt Conference and what that has meant to us and the relationships that we have developed from being in this conference. We have great respect for the programs that we have had the opportunity to play and hopefully those relationships can continue down the road in terms of competition. The Western Athletic Conference is something that we have strived for for more than 30 years. This is very meaningful for Utah State University. The regionality makes sense for us as an athletic program, but our fans and supporters need, and look forward to this competition."

"Even though our stay in the Sun Belt Conference has been short, we strive to do things the right way and we will continue to represent the conference to the best of our ability for the remainder of this year and through the 2004 season."

Stew Morrill, USU Head Basketball Coach

"It is a very good day for all associated with Utah State athletics. President (Kermit) Hall and athletics director Rance Pugmire should feel a great sense of accomplishment because they have worked tirelessly to make it happen. The Western Athletic Conference simply makes sense from a common sense viewpoint. All of our programs will face a tremendous challenge in this move upwards and we must make our fans aware of the help and patience we will need for them to have success. I couldn't be happier that we have found a "home" in the west."

Burt Fuller, USU Head Volleyball Coach

"We are excited about the move, but its not for two more years. We still have to finish out this season and next season in the Big West Conference. Going over to the Western Athletic Conference is a real positive from our stand-point as there is real good volleyball in the WAC, and geographically it makes a lot of sense for us and I think it is going to be a great step for our program."

Utah State University/Western Athletic Conf. Information

USU Conference History (Football)

1892-1937	Independent
1938-1961	Mountain States/Skyline
1962-1977	Independent
1978-2000	PCAA/Big West
2001-2002	Independent
2003-	Sun Belt

USU Conference History (Basketball)

1918-37	Rocky Mountain
1938-62	Mountain States
1963-1978	Independent
1979-pres.	PCAA/Big West

USU's Big West Conf. Championships (36)

Men (23)
Basketball (5) - 1980, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002
(Basketball won league tournament in 1998, 2000, 01, 03)
Cross Country (4) - 1992, 1993, 1994, 2002
Football (5) - 1979, 1980, 1994, 1997, 1998
Track (7) - 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003
Wrestling (2) - 1978, 1979

Women (13)
Cross Country (1) - 1998
Gymnastics (4) - 1992, 1996, 1998, 2001
Softball (1) - 1993
Track (7) - 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

USU's National Championships (3)

Volleyball - 1978 (AIAW)
Softball - 1980 (AIAW)
Softball - 1981 (AIAW)

Western Athletic Conference Institutions

Boise State
Fresno State
Hawai'i
Louisiana Tech
Nevada
San Jose State
Texas-El Paso
Current members expected to go to Conference USA in 2005-06)
Rice
Southern Methodist
Tulsa
New Members (2005-06)
Utah State
New Mexico State

Western Athletic Conf. Sports Offered (18)

Men (8)

Baseball
Basketball
Cross Country
Football
Golf
Tennis
Indoor Track and Field
Outdoor Track and Field
(USU sponsors all but baseball)

Women (10)

Basketball
Cross Country
Golf
Soccer
Softball
Swimming and Diving
Tennis
Indoor Track and Field
Outdoor Track and Field
Volleyball
(USU sponsors all except Swimming and Diving, plus Gymnastics)

Future NCAA Legislation

Division I-A Institutional Requirements (Effective 2004)

- 200 Full Athletic Grants
- Host 5 I-A Home Games
- Average 15,000 at Home Games
- Sponsor 16 Sports
- Must give 90% of 85 Football Grants/Year (two-year average)

I-A Conference Requirements (Effective 2005)

- 8 Full-Time I-A Members
(playing football, men's basketball and three women's team sports)

USU vs. The WAC (Football)

• USU has played 81 games against current members of the Western Athletic Conference all-time

• USU's 81 games against current Western Athletic Conference teams are its third most against any conference, as the Aggies entered 2003 with 348 matchups against current Mountain West Conference teams, 93 vs. Big Sky and 81 vs. Western Athletic Conference schools.

• Since 1990, USU has played 37 football games against current members of the WAC.

• USU has been in the same conference as five current WAC members before when all were in the Big West Conference. USU was a member of that league from 1978-2000 in football. Here is a look at the other school's involvement in the Big West:

Boise State - 1996-2000
Fresno State - 1978-91
Louisiana Tech - 1993-94
Nevada - 1992-99
New Mexico State - 1985-2000, 2003#
- USU and NMSU are members of the Sun Belt

USU Football Bowl Games

1946 Raisin Bowl
1947 Grape Bowl
1960 Sun Bowl
1961 Gotham Bowl
1993 Las Vegas Bowl (Champions)
1997 Humanitarian Bowl

WAC Series History (Football)

	Series	Last Meeting	Years In Big West Together
Boise State	4-7-0	L 38-62, 2002	1996-2000
Fresno State	9-10-1	L 21-70, 2001	1978-91
Hawai'i	4-1-0	W 48-0, 1966	N/A
Louisiana Tech	2-0-0	W 7-3, 1994	1993-94
Nevada	4-10-0	W 37-35, 1999	1992-99
San Jose State	9-17-1	L 30-32, 1995	1978-92
Texas-El Paso	2-0-0	W 21-6, 1961	N/A
Totals	**34-45-2**		
*New Mexico State	23-4-0	W 32-30, 2002	1985-2000, 2003#

NOTE: USU has never faced Rice, Southern Methodist or Tulsa, who are ironically expected to be leaving the WAC for Conference USA in 2005-06

* - New Mexico State will join WAC with Utah State in 2005-06.

- Both schools are current members of the Sun Belt Conference.

USU vs. The WAC (Basketball)

Opponent	Series	Last Meeting
Boise State	16-5	2001
Fresno State	20-16	2000
Hawai'i	2-0	1967
Louisiana Tech	N/A	
Nevada	22-7	2000
Rice	N/A	
San Jose State	33-20	1996
Southern Methodist	N/A	
Texas-El Paso	1-4	1970
Tulsa	0-2	1967
Totals	94-54	
*New Mexico State	26-20	2000

* - New Mexico State will join WAC with Utah State in 2005-06.

USU NCAA Tournament Appearances

1939, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1970, 1971, 1975, 1980, 1983, 1988, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003

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Utah State University Athletics 2002-03 Year In Review

Utah State University has a long standing tradition of success both on the fields of play and in the classroom. Individual and team honors have become commonplace at the school and that success continues today.

In 2002-03, Utah State added two more Big West Conference team championships to its coffers with league championships in men's cross country and men's outdoor track. Individually Mitch Zundel was named the league's cross country athlete of the year and Gregg Gensel was named the league's coach of the year in both men's cross country and men's track and field.

Other conference individual awards included Zuzana Cernianska being named to the co-freshman of the year in volleyball and Desmond Penigar being named the Basketball Tournament Most Valuable Player. USU had eight first-team all-conference selections as well as six individual conference champions during 2002-03.

In addition, the Aggies once again led the Big West in all-academic honorees in 2002-03 with 66. In all, USU had 106 individuals earn academic all-conference accolades with additional selections in indoor track (Mountain Pacific Sports Federation) and gymnastics (Western Conference). USU produced a school record 157 student-athletes, trainers, and managers who were named Joe E. Whitesides scholar-athletes.

This spring USU was recognized in an NCAA report as its athletics graduation rate of 81 percent tied for 10th in the nation. The Aggie football program was honored for being one of 25 schools in the nation to post a 70 percent graduation rate as USU graduated 79 percent of its players in the study's time frame.

Women's basketball was reinstated and begins play this year after a 16-year absence after being dropped in 1987.

The program improved its facilities with the addition of a state of the art video/scoreboard in the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum, new scoreboards at the soccer and softball venues and a new soccer field last year. USU also replaced wooden bleachers in the football stadium with aluminum bleachers.

USU 2002-03 Year in Review

Men's Sports	**Overall**	**Conf. Finish**	**Postseason**
Basketball	24-9	3rd (12-6)	NCAA First Round
Cross Country	—	1st	8th NCAA Regional
Football	4-7	—	—
Golf	—	9th	—
Indoor Track	—	8th (MPSF)	—
Outdoor Track	—	1st	Individuals at NCAA
Tennis	7-13	t5th	—

Women's Sports	**Overall**	**Conf. Finish**	**Postseason**
Cross Country	—	4th	8th NCAA Regional
Gymnastics	9-13	4th (WGC)	—
Indoor Track	—	8th (MPSF)	—
Outdoor Track	—	5th	Individuals at NCAA
Soccer	8-9-3	9th (2-6-1)	—
Softball	8-40	t8th (3-18)	—
Tennis	9-10	t5th	—
Volleyball	14-16	6th (7-11)	—

Utah State University Athletics Program Notable

Men's Sports

Basketball

Has produced six 20-win seasons in the last seven years and seven of the last nine seasons. Played in the NCAA Tournament in 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2003, while participating in the NIT in 1995 and 2002. USU won Big West Conference regular season championships in 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, and 2002 and claimed the league tournament title in 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2003.

Cross Country

Has finished first or second in the Big West in 10 of the last 11 years with four league titles from 1993-95 and last year (2002).

Football

Played for the Big West Championship in 2000, its last year in the conference before going independent. In the first three years under current head coach Mick Dennehy, who took over the team ahead of the 2000 season, USU has produced three of the top five season attendance average marks in school history.

Golf

Best finish at the conference meet was fourth in 1997. This fall, USU already has individuals producing the best performances the team has had since 1998.

Track and Field

Outdoor track has won seven conference titles in the last 10 years, including the 2003 championship, while indoor track competes in the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation and has finished among the top four in three of the last five years. USU has had seven individuals finish among the top four in the NCAA in the last six years including national runner-up finishes by three different athletes.

Tennis

USU's tennis has tied for fifth at the league championships in each of the last four years after placing ninth in the previous three years.

Women's Sports

Basketball

Beginning its first year of play this fall after the program was dropped after the 1987 season due to budget cuts. Four players were on campus last year, redshirting under head coach Raegan Pebley.

Cross Country

Claimed the Big West title in 1998 and has finished among the top four at the conference meet in eight of the last nine years.

Gymnastics

The Aggies have advanced to postseason competition in 24 of the last 26 years. Has won four conference championships, including the 2001 Big West Championship. The Big West dropped gymnastics after the 2001 season and the Aggies finished fourth in the Western Gymnastics Conference last year.

Track and Field

This program has been a dominant force in the league winning seven straight outdoor championships from 1993-99 and finishing second in 2000 and 2001 before placing fourth in 2002 and fifth in 2003.

Soccer

Started in 1996, the soccer team has shown improvement every year. Last year the Aggies handed league champion Cal State Fullerton its only conference loss. This season, the Aggies have won a school record nine matches (9-5-1) with four regular season matches remaining.

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Softball

Owns two of USU's three national championships as the Aggies won AIAW national titles in 1980 and 1981. USU won the Big West title in 1993, but has not finished higher than sixth in the league in the last seven years.

Tennis

Posted its best conference finishes in the last three years by tying for fifth each season.

Volleyball

Advanced to the NCAA Tournament second round in 2000 and 2001 and was ranked in the top 25 both years as well. Owns a 13-7 record so far this season.

Academics

Utah State University's athletics program is ranked among the top 10 in the nation in graduation rate of its student-athletes according to the most recent report published by the NCAA. According to the report, which measures all freshman student-athletes that entered in the fall of 1996 and had six years to graduate, the Aggies have a graduation rate of 81 percent to tie for 10th place with Syracuse and Rice.

Utah State has led the Big West Conference in academic all-conference selections in four of the last five years, including a league best 66 in 2003.

Western Athletic Conference History

July 1, 2003
(taken from WACsports.com)

The Western Athletic Conference features some of the most exciting competition at some of the most diverse campuses in the nation. With 10 members in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Idaho, Nevada, California and Hawaii, the WAC continues to build upon its most recent success.

The WAC provides its student-athletes the chance to travel to scenic destinations and gain exposure in some of the nation's largest and most accessible media markets. In addition, the academic reputation of many of the WAC schools is unparalleled, with some of the nation's most respected institutions of higher learning among the WAC ranks.

This season marks the 42nd for the WAC, making it the sixth oldest among the nation's 11 Division I-A conferences. Its history traces back to 1962, when the original six-team league was created. The concept of a Western Athletic Conference began in 1958 when Brigham Young's Edwin Kimball, Leo Harris of Oregon and Roy S. Keen of Oregon State met during the NCAA Convention in New York to discuss the "ideal conference" because problems existed in their alignments. They believed such a conference should have eight members with approximately the same goals, ideals and resources and that such a union would include the following members: Washington State, Oregon State, Oregon, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Arizona State and Brigham Young.

Although the meeting did not result in any action, it established an idea that again was discussed two years later at the 1960 NCAA Convention in New York. There, Dick Clausen, athletics director at Arizona, and Pete McDavid, athletics director at New Mexico, organized a meeting which included representatives of Oregon State, Oregon, Washington State, Brigham Young, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona and Arizona State. Glenn "Red" Jacoby of Wyoming also was to be invited to the meeting but could not be located on short notice.

BYU's Dr. Kimball was elected the chairman of the group and, over the next two years, plans were formulated as the faculty representatives and presidents became involved with the athletic directors in the deliberations. As proposals were discussed, finances became the determining factor, evidenced by the following membership criteria: large facilities or a commitment to build them; location in or near a large population center; large student body; easy access by means of large jet aircraft; demonstrated fan support; winning athletic tradition; and commitment to maintain a varied and extensive athletic program.

While the membership structure was debated, Washington State, Oregon and Oregon State decided to realign with the other Pacific Coast institutions, and the remaining university representatives were left to fill the openings. Although Wyoming, New Mexico State and Utah State applied, only Wyoming was accepted as the final charter member.

By the end of 1961, a working draft of a constitution, by-laws and operating code was drafted by Thomas Hall, the faculty representative at Arizona, and Paul Brechler, the WAC's first commissioner. On July 27, 1962, the conference officially was organized by the Presidents' Council when the original charter was signed, and the name Western Athletic Conference was adopted. Charter members were Arizona, Arizona State, Brigham Young, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. The two Arizona schools had been members of the Border Conference; the others were members of the Skyline.

The WAC began operation with the 1962-63 academic year, and several changes have occurred since. UTEP and Colorado State became members in September 1967, while Arizona and Arizona State withdrew on June 30, 1978. Other membership additions included San Diego State (July 1, 1978); Hawai`i (July 1, 1979); Air Force (July 1, 1980); Fresno State (July 1, 1992); UNLV, Rice, San Jose State, SMU, TCU and Tulsa (July 1, 1996); and Nevada (July 1, 2000). Air Force, Brigham Young, Colorado State, UNLV, New Mexico, San Diego State, Utah and Wyoming withdrew on June 30, 1999. Boise State and Louisiana Tech became WAC members on July 1, 2001, while TCU withdrew following the 2000-01 season.

Paul Brechler was the WAC Commissioner from 1962-1968, Wiles Hallock from 1968-1971, Stan Bates from 1971-80, Dr. Joe Kearney from 1980-94 and Karl Benson from 1994 to the present.

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The WAC began competition with 10 sports, including football, basketball, track and field, baseball, wrestling, swimming, tennis, golf, cross country and gymnastics. The first championship was held in November 1962, when Arizona won the men's cross country title. New Mexico followed with the first WAC football title. Arizona finished second in the NCAA College World Series and, less than three years later, Arizona State claimed the league's first NCAA title when the Sun Devils won the College World Series trophy.

Before July 1, 1990, the WAC sponsored championships only in men's sports. However, a merger with the High Country Athletic Conference formed a single conference under one administrative structure, and the 1990-91 athletic year was the first in which both men and women competed under the WAC name.

Presently the WAC crowns team and individual champions in 18 sports – eight men's and 10 women's. For the men, there are championships in baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, tennis, indoor track and field and outdoor track and field. Championships for women are held in basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, tennis, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field and volleyball.

The WAC office has been located in the Denver area since the conference's inception with the exception of a two-year stay in Phoenix from 1964-66.