School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education is Divided and Growing

Lynnette Harris

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by Lynnette Harris

In an effort to better serve students in the largest department in the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences (CAAS), and to advance career and technical education programs, particularly in southeastern Utah, CAAS Dean Ken White and USU President Noelle Cockett announced in October that the School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education (ASTE) has been divided.

Professor and Head of ASTE, Bruce Miller, continues to lead programs in the Aviation and Technical Education (AVTE) division, and Associate Professor and Associate Department Head Rebecca Lawver, has been appointed interim head of ASTE.

Under the new administrative structure, Lawver oversees programs that train future secondary school teachers of family and consumer sciences, technology and engineering, agriculture, and business education. She leads programs in outdoor product design and development, agricultural communication, agricultural machinery technology, and agricultural systems technology.

Miller continues to lead aviation, general technology, technology systems, and an array of certificate, associate’s degree programs in career areas including automotive technology, building and construction management, heavy equipment and trucking operation, cosmetology, health professions, IT support and web development, welding, and general technology. Many programs in the new division are offered at USU Eastern in Price, USU Blanding, and USU Moab.

The change supports President Cockett’s priorities of making post-secondary education accessible to underserved populations and communities across Utah and enhancing student success through experiential learning. It also bolsters efforts to fulfill a 2019 mandate from the Utah Legislature that USU’s southeast campuses redefine career and technical education (CTE). The senate bill also supports altering the university’s tuition structure for CTE programs, and provides ongoing funding for new CTE programs in southeastern Utah.

ASTE currently has 1,432 students. Following the change, Lawver will oversee programs for 574 students: 510 undergraduate and 64 graduate students. The new division, under Miller’s direction, has 858 students: 852 undergraduates and 6 graduate students.

White told the department’s faculty and staff that the change is a direct reflection of great faculty across the state who are innovative and creating programs and opportunities that students need and want to be part of. And while growing programs present some challenges in terms of classroom, shop, and laboratory space, growing programs present the kind of problems he likes to have and solve.

Miller has served as ASTE department head since 2004. Since that time, the department has acquired and developed a number of programs that serve students by focusing on areas of economic opportunity for graduates. Lawver came to USU in 2010 as an assistant professor of agricultural education. Prior to that, she was an instructor at the University of Missouri and taught high school agriculture for 9 years in Nebraska. She has received numerous regional and national awards for outstanding teaching and mentoring.