



University of Utah awarded \$19 million from USAID

The grant was awarded to the U and partners to provide technical assistance to strengthen Pakistan's higher education ecosystem.

The University of Utah received a 5-year, \$19 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to launch the Higher Education Systems Strengthening Activity (HESSA) Project in Pakistan. Recipients include the U's [Office for Global Engagement](#) and [Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering](#) which will co-host the project coordination, management, and implementation both in the U.S. and Pakistan. Other U.S. project partners include the [University of Alabama](#) and [the Institute of International Education](#).

The U.S. institutions will work closely with [Pakistan's Higher Education Commission \(HEC\)](#) to strengthen the administrative systems, curriculum, and student life supports that will ultimately help students meet the needs of the workplace.

The interdisciplinary HESSA team will work to foster a bridge between the private sector and academia to address curriculum, teaching, and research gaps, including leadership capacity building.

"The University of Utah is a global university with engagement in over 200 countries. This USAID grant builds-on our existing relationships in Pakistan and will allow us to grow opportunities for Pakistani students and our educators," said Taylor Randall, president of the University of Utah. "We look forward to working with our U.S. partners and Pakistan's Higher Education Commission to strengthen Pakistan's educational infrastructure and achieve its goal to provide students an excellent academic experience."

Areas of focus at select universities in Pakistan will include increasing the employability of graduates, facilitating the use of research results to create private sector jobs, and increasing opportunities for underrepresented and disadvantaged students and higher education administrators. HESSA member institutions will promote best practices in undergraduate and graduate education, and strengthen contributions of research universities to the country's economy.

"This important strategic initiative will increase access to and improve the quality of our higher education institutions in Pakistan," said HESSA Chief of Party Aslam Chaudhry. "The HESSA Project continues the vital work of USAID with the Government of Pakistan and its development partners."

This unique partnership is designed to boost the international stature for global collaborations in Pakistan. Creating these opportunities will, in turn, strengthen the entire education-employment ecosystem for Pakistani faculty, graduates, and employers.

“Expanding upon our long-standing higher education partnerships in Pakistan is an exciting endeavor that will foster the definition of academic rigor in the region,” said Michael Barber, chair, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and principal investigator, HESSA Project. “Our team enjoys exchanging knowledge and ideas to help international higher education institutions meet their evolving needs. In doing so, we learn so much about global challenges and opportunities that we can then bring back to Utah to share with our colleagues and students.”

The U has remained involved in Pakistan’s higher education development since the 2014 launch of the [U.S.-Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Water](#)—also a USAID-funded initiative, aimed at helping to train the next generation of the country’s water engineers. The reputation garnered during that project led to additional educational initiatives and capacity-building partnerships throughout the country.

“The University of Utah is fast becoming known for international thought-leadership and the HESSA project is a continuation of that work. Projects of this caliber make me very excited to be stepping into the role of Chief Global Officer at this time,” said Brian Gibson, who recently joined the U’s Office for Global Engagement. “We look forward to helping USAID deliver on its international development mission on behalf of the American people.”

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