



Utah university's top academic officer placed on leave

University officials are staying silent on the reasons for the action.



(Jud Burkett | Special to The Tribune) Crews install a "Utah Tech" sign on the east side of Greater Zion Stadium in 2022.

By  Mark Eddington | Oct. 3, 2024, 6:00 a.m.

 Comment

St. George • Utah Tech University's chief academic officer and a candidate to become the educational institution's next president has been placed on leave for several months.

Michael Lacourse, the university's provost and vice president of academic affairs, has been placed on leave until January 2025. Chris Guyman, Utah Tech's current associate

provost for academic programs and operations, has been appointed to serve as interim provost until Lacourse's expected return, university officials confirmed.

"The university has every confidence that the Division of Academic Affairs and our students will be well supported through the end of the year," university spokesperson Jyl Hall told The Salt Lake Tribune in an email.

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University officials declined to comment further on why Lacourse has been placed on leave and if he is being paid during his absence. Lacourse could not be reached for comment.



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Courtney White, the university's interim president, sent an email to school officials last Wednesday, before his decision to appoint Guyman as interim provost.

“I write this morning to inform you that Provost Michael Lacourse has been placed on leave until January 2025,” White informed colleagues in the email. “I will be visiting with Academic Affairs personnel as well as faculty leadership to solicit feedback and recommendations for an interim provost during that time period. My plan is to make a decision as soon as possible.”



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Both White and Lacourse are among the candidates the Utah Board of Higher Education is considering in its ongoing search to find a replacement for former Utah Tech President [Richard “Biff” Williams](#), who [stepped down last January to pursue other opportunities](#), according to a university official who asked not be identified because the source was not authorized to speak on the matter.

Utah System of Higher Education officials have declined to comment on any candidates.

Before his selection as interim president, White served as president of Utah Tech’s executive affairs, Williams’ chief of staff and secretary to the university’s board of trustees. Before coming to Utah Tech in 2015, he served as a lobbyist for the University of Oregon and in a similar capacity with the Utah Education Association. His professional experience also includes work with the Nevada, Oregon and Utah systems of higher education, the latter as assistant commissioner over planning and policy.

White holds an associate degree from Snow College, a bachelor’s degree from Utah State University, a master’s degree from the University of Utah and a law degree from the University of Oregon.

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Lacourse has served in his present position since Feb. 1, 2016, overseeing the university's academic programs, working closely with deans and promoting teaching that places more emphasis on a learner-centered approach to education. As a result, Utah Tech's board of trustees recently honored the provost with its Excellence in Service Award.

Before coming to Utah Tech, Lacourse served as dean at Sam Houston State University in Texas and at National University in California. He has a bachelor's degree from Springfield College in Massachusetts, and a master's and two doctorates from Indiana University.

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