

# MICHAEL TAFT BENSON

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Office of the President  
Eastern Kentucky University  
521 Lancaster Avenue  
Richmond, KY 40475  
Office: 859-622-2101

### EDUCATION

#### **Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.)**

University of Oxford, St. Antony's College, June 1995

Dissertation: "Sympathy or Strategy: President Harry S. Truman's Decision to Recognize the State of Israel, May 1948"

Dissertation Committee: John Lewis Gaddis, Chair; Robert Dallek; Daniel Walker Howe

#### **Master of Non-Profit Administration (M.N.A.) *cum laude***

University of Notre Dame, Mendoza College of Business, January 2011

#### **Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) *cum laude***

Brigham Young University, April 1990

Major: Political Science

Minors: English and History

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE

#### **Eastern Kentucky University**

President (August 1, 2013 to present)

Principal Duties: Responsible for nearly 17,000 students, 2300 full-time faculty and staff, and an annual budget of over \$355 million on four campuses: Richmond (main campus), Corbin, Danville, and Manchester. The University offers 99 bachelor's programs, 43 master's and 4 clinical doctorates. ECU sponsors 17 Division I athletic teams and is the 3-time defending Commissioner's Cup champion of the Ohio Valley Conference. Significant accomplishments in past 4 years include: largest enrollment ever (Fall 2015) with the best-prepared freshman class in the University's history (Fall 2016; 91% of freshmen are from Kentucky); significant increases in retention and graduation rates; over \$220 million in non-state funded capital construction; biggest state appropriation ever for a capital project (\$66.5 million for Science Center Phase II); highest fund-raising totals over a three-year period in University's history (2015-17); one of two public Kentucky universities listed in *Chronicle of Higher Education* Great Colleges to Work For 2016.

I report to an 11-person Board of Regents and work with the Council on Postsecondary Education which has coordinating responsibilities for Kentucky's 8 public universities and a state-wide community college system.

Academic Appointment: Professor of Government

### **Southern Utah University**

President (January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2013)

Principal Duties: Responsible for a campus which secured designation as Utah's public liberal arts university and membership in COPLAC (Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges). Significant accomplishments during nearly seven-year tenure included: largest fund-raising campaign in the University's history (\$105 million); entry into the Big Sky Conference; construction of new teacher education facility, new science and engineering complex, and new student housing; improvement in six-year graduation rate from 38.7% in 2007 to 52% in 2013. I reported to a 10-person SUU Board of Trustees and a 16-person Utah State Board of Regents.

Academic Appointment: Professor of Political Science

### **Snow College**

President (December 1, 2001 to December 31, 2006)

Principal Duties: Responsible for Utah's oldest two-year public institution with campuses in Ephraim (main campus) and Richfield. Significant accomplishments during five-year tenure included: partnership with the Juilliard School of Music to offer summer camps; more private funds raised in 5 years than in the previous 116 years combined of Snow's history; largest amount of state support for capital improvements in history (over \$25 million). I reported to a 10-person Snow College Board of Trustees and a 16-person Utah State Board of Regents.

Academic Appointment: Professor of History

## **OTHER SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **University of Utah**

Secretary to the University (February 1, 2000 to November 30, 2001)

Special Assistant to the President (June 1, 1999 to January 31, 2000)

Associate Director of Major Gifts (December 1, 1998 to May 31, 1999)

Major Gifts Officer (December 1, 1995 to November 30, 1998)

Principal Duties: Began my academic career working in major gifts and advanced to working in the president's office, serving as both special assistant to J. Bernard Machen (formerly the President of

the University of Florida), and as Secretary to the Board of Trustees with responsibilities as primary liaison to the President's Cabinet, the Utah State Board of Regents, major donors, and state and federal officials. In addition to these duties, I taught a course every semester and was named co-Principal Investigator (P.I.) for the largest non-health sciences grant in the University's history from the Pew Charitable Trusts to study campaign finance reform.

Academic Appointment: Associate Professor of Political Science (Adjunct)

**Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri**

Consulting Historian (August 1, 1997 to December 31, 1998)

**Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California**

Academic Advisor and Essayist (July 1, 1997 to May 31, 1998)

**United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Washington, D.C.**

Research Assistant (May 1, 1990 to May 31, 1991)

**SERVICE TO EDUCATION**

Convener, State of Kentucky Public College and University Presidents, July 2017 to present

Member, Council of Presidents, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), June 2017 to present

Member, Task Force on University Partnerships, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), April 2017 to present

Presidential Representative, on-site reaffirmation team, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC), College of Charleston, South Carolina, March 2017

Chair, NCAA Honors Committee, January 2016 to present

Presidential Representative, off-site Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) reaffirmation team, 3 institutions, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2015

Co-Chair, Teacher Preparation Task Force, Kentucky Rising, July 2015 to present

Member, NCAA Honors Committee, November 2014 to present

Co-Chair, Bluegrass Higher Education Consortium, July 2014 to present

Member, The Presidents' Trust, Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), November 2012 to present

Chair, Ohio Valley Conference Presidents' Council, June 2014 to June 2015

Member, University of Utah World Leaders Advisory Cabinet, June 2008 to July 2013

Vice Chair, Big Sky Conference Presidents' Council, June 2012 to June 2013

Chair, Summit League Presidents' Council, June 2009 to June 2011

Member, Board of Advisors, Center for Policy Analysis, American Council for Education (ACE), January 2009 to January 2011

Chair, Executive Board, Utah State Campus Compact, April 2003 to April 2005

Chair, Mountain States Association of Community Colleges, August 2003 to August 2004

Member, University of Utah International Studies Advisory Board, June 1999 to June 2001

Member *ex officio*, Eccles School of Business Board of Advisors, University of Utah, June 1997 to June 2001

Member *ex officio*, University of Utah S. J. Quinney College of Law Board of Trustees, August 1996 to August 1999

Member *ex officio*, Pioneer Memorial Theatre Board of Directors, June 1995 to June 1999

## **SERVICE TO BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY**

Member, Kentucky Rising Steering Committee, January 2015 to present

Member, Richmond Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, January 2014 to present

Member, Richmond Rotary Club (Paul Harris Fellow), August 2013 to present

Member, Rocky Mountain Power Regional Board of Advisors, January 2011 to July 2013

Member, Utah Shakespeare Festival Board of Governors, June 2010 to July 2013

Member, Cedar City Airport Advisory Committee, April 2010 to July 2013

Member, Wells Fargo Bank, Southern Utah Board of Advisors, April 2007 to July 2013

Member, Cedar City Rotary Club (Paul Harris Fellow), January 2007 to July 2013

Citizen Member, Utah State Appellate Court Nominating Commission (4 year term); appointed by Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., May 2009 to May 2013

Member, Utah Humanities Council Board of Directors, June 2010 to June 2012

Member, Zions Bank, Central Utah Board of Advisors, January 2003 to March 2005

## **SELECTED AWARDS, HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS**

### ***AWARDS, HONORS, AND FELLOWSHIPS***

Honorary Member, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity, February 2017

Honoree, American Cancer Society Lexington KY Chapter “Belles & Beaus,” May 2016

Recent Alumni Service Award, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, September 2013

Father Theodore Hesburgh Founder’s Award, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, May 2011

Named one of Utah’s “100 Most Influential People” *Utah Business* magazine, January 2011

Mendoza College of Business Master of Non-Profit Fellowship, University of Notre Dame, 2009-10

Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honor Society, April 2009

Administrator of the Year, Utah Music Educators Association, May 2005

Named one of Utah’s “Rising Stars: 40 under 40,” *Utah Business* magazine, January 2003

Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship, University of Oxford and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993-94

Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, 1990

Golden Key National Honor Society, 1990

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and *Foreign Policy* Essay Contest Finalist, 1990

Vice President, Beta Mu Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha (PSA) Political Science Honor Society, 1990

Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies Scholarship, 1989

Dean's Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 1986-88

Leadership Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 1984

### ***GRANTS AWARDED***

The Pew Charitable Trusts (\$3.5 million) to establish the Intermountain Center for Campaign and Media Legal Reforms, University of Utah, 2001

University of Oxford Graduate Studies Research Grant, 1992-94

Harry S. Truman Presidential Library Institute Research Grant, 1993

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### ***BOOKS***

*College for the Commonwealth: Higher Education's Value to American Democracy* with Hal R. Boyd, University Press of Kentucky (2017).

*Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

#### ***BOOK CHAPTER AND SELECTED MONOGRAPHS***

"Recognizing Israel: A Little Touch of Harry in the Night," in *Israel and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, Michael J. Devine, Robert P. Watson, Robert J. Wolz, editors, Volume 3 (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2008).

"The Public University: Recalling Higher Education's Democratic Purposes," with Hal R. Boyd, *Thought and Action: NEA Journal on Higher Education*, Volume 31, Summer 2015.

"The Puzzle of Palestine: Harry S. Truman and the American Recognition of Israel," *Harry S. Truman and the Recognition of Israel*, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, 1998.

"Harry S. Truman and the Modern State of Israel," *Amit Magazine*, Summer 1998.

"The Modern-day Cyrus: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel, May 1948," *On Moral Grounds: President Harry S. Truman and the Birth of the State of Israel*, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA, April 1998.

"Harry S. Truman as a Modern-day Cyrus," *Brigham Young University Studies* 34 (Fall 1994).

## *SELECTED OPINION PIECES*

- “EKU’s ‘campus beautiful’ expanded, updated” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, July 25, 2017.
- “The Magic of Enthusiasm,” *Huffington Post*, July 1, 2017.
- “The March for Science and American Higher Education,” *Huffington Post*, April 25, 2017.
- “The Meaning and Purpose of the University,” *Huffington Post*, February 7, 2017.
- “How a Bucket of Ice Water Inspired the World,” *Huffington Post*, December 14, 2016.
- “Alma Mater: The Nourishing Mother,” *Huffington Post*, September 6, 2016.
- “Liberal-arts education essential to advance in tech age,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, February 8, 2016.
- “Liberal Arts and Tomorrow’s Workforce,” *Louisville Courier-Journal*, February 2, 2016.
- “The Worst are Full of Passionate Intensity,” *Huffington Post*, November 19, 2015.
- “A Transferrable Set of Skills,” *Inside Sources*, August 15, 2015.
- “A Graduation Unlike Any Other,” *Huffington Post*, May 7, 2015.
- “Lives of Curiosity and Consequence,” *Huffington Post*, August 22, 2014.
- “Two Public Policies That Transformed Our Nation,” *Huffington Post*, June 21, 2014.
- “Operation Overlord and the Norfolk House,” *Huffington Post*, June 9, 2014.
- “A Redress of Grievances,” *Huffington Post*, March 10, 2014.
- “Athletes pay more than fair share; university benefits from spotlight,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, December 16, 2013.
- “The Meaning of Libraries,” *Huffington Post*, December 9, 2013.
- “What Good is College?” *Huffington Post*, February 2, 2013.
- “The British Empire, Olympic Games, and the Power of Sport,” *Huffington Post*, August 9, 2012.
- “The Irreplaceable Value of the Liberal Arts,” *Huffington Post*, June 18, 2012.
- “The Liberal Arts Degree is a Portal to Anywhere,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 8, 2011.

“A Road Less Traveled,” *Inside Higher Ed*, February 3, 2010.

“SUU Gymnastics team the Butler of the West,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 19, 2010.

“A Time to Bond,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 8, 2009.

“Junior Colleges a Great Start for Athletes,” *Deseret News*, December 2, 2005.

“What’s the Big Deal About College Football?” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 2004.

“Reagan Proved that the Words of a President Matter,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 11, 2004.

“Palestine in 1948 Offers Cautionary Tale for Iraq,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 25, 2004.

“Utahans Should Invest in Higher Education,” *Deseret News*, December 29, 2003.

“Truman’s Actions Speaker Louder Than His Words,” *Deseret News*, July 20, 2003.

“Truman’s Support for Israel,” *Kansas City Star*, October 9, 2002.

“Snow College Sacrifices Ensure Continued Excellence,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 12, 2002.

“S.L. Council Shows Vision in West-East Light-rail Support,” *Deseret News*, December 26, 1999.

“Truman Helped Israel Survive its Infancy,” *Deseret News*, May 26, 1998.

“Let’s Not Bury Our Future in I-15 Rubble,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 20, 1997.

“Higher Education Drives Economic Growth,” *Deseret News*, March 24, 1997.

“Bill Clinton is no ‘Give ‘em Hell’ Harry Truman,” *Arizona Republic*, November 18, 1994.

“Moral Man,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 1993.

## **SELECTED PRESENTATIONS**

“*Lessons in Leadership*,” featured speaker, Rogers Scholars Class of 2017, Lindsey Wilson College, Columbia, Kentucky, June 20, 2014.

“*Partnership Profile: Eastern Kentucky University and How We Have Accomplished Our P3 Projects*,” featured presenter, American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Partnership Meeting, Washington, D.C., June 14, 2017.



“*Characteristics of Strategic Doers*,” keynote speaker, Leadership Kentucky, Elevate Kentucky Class of 2017, Campton, Kentucky, April 10, 2017.

“@CollegePresident - *Becoming a Social Media Leader the Campus Community Will Follow*,” workshop presenter, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, CASE Region III Kentucky Annual Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, December 8, 2016.

“*Change, Challenge, Opportunity*,” keynote speaker, Women Leading Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, January 4, 2016.

“*Current Issues Facing Higher Education*,” keynote speaker, Bluegrass Higher Education Consortium Academic Leadership Academy, Lexington, Kentucky, May 15, 2015.

“*Student Success Strategies at Eastern Kentucky University*,” keynote speaker, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Student Success Summit, Louisville, Kentucky, March 31, 2015.

“*Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*,” keynote speaker, Eliezer Society of Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, November 14, 2014.

“*The Role of the Morrill Land Grant Act and G.I. Bill in Shaping American Higher Education*,” featured speaker, Yale Law School, New Haven, Connecticut, November 14, 2014.

“*Empowering EKU Students for the Challenges of Today*,” keynote speaker, Urban League of Lexington, Lexington, Kentucky, October 20, 2014.

“*Why Plans are Important Even if You **Are** Punched in the Mouth*,” inaugural speaker, Chautauqua, Lecture 2014-15 series at Eastern Kentucky University entitled *Strategy*, Richmond, Kentucky, August 26, 2014.

“*Good Morning Bluegrass: Higher Education Issues*,” panel discussant, Commerce Lexington, Lexington, Kentucky, December 13, 2013.

“*The Role of Presidents in Fund Raising*,” panel discussant, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, CASE Region III Kentucky Annual Conference, Lexington, Kentucky, December 12, 2013.

“*Truman and the Recognition of Israel*,” featured speaker, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, U.S. Presidents and the Middle East: Truman to Obama, Summer Teachers Conference, Independence, Missouri, July 15, 2013.

“*The Thunderbard Project: Embedding the Utah Shakespeare Festival Into the First-Year SUU Orientation Experience*,” workshop presenter, American Association of Colleges and Universities, AAC&U Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, January 25, 2013.

*"Reframing Education,"* panel discussant, Festival of Thinkers, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, November 14, 2011.

*"The History of Higher Education in the West,"* featured speaker, Utah Rural Summit, Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah, August 11, 2011.

*"The Importance of Learning,"* keynote speaker, History Association, LDS Tabernacle, St. George, Utah, May 29, 2011.

*"Transitions Through Trio,"* keynote speaker, Utah Statewide TRIO Conference, Moab, Utah, April 4, 2011.

*"Higher Education in the New Millennium,"* panel discussant, Education Without Borders, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, March 31, 2009.

*"The American Cyrus: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel,"* inaugural speaker, Jewish Federation of Utah, Israel: 60 Years Photographic Exhibit sponsored by Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 22, 2008.

*"Truman and the Recognition of Israel,"* featured speaker, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, 1948: Year of Decisions, Summer Teachers Conference, Independence, Missouri, July 14, 2008.

*"The Evolution of the United States Presidency,"* featured speaker, Huntsman Teachers Seminar, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, June 13, 2006.

*"Strategies for Student Success Utilized at Snow College,"* keynote speaker, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), "Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, September 24, 2004.

*"The Impact of Innovation: The Modern American Research University,"* featured presenter, Oxford Roundtable, University of Oxford, England, July 5, 2004.

*"The President's Role in Closing the Major Gift,"* featured presenter, Council for Advancement and Support of Education, CASE Region VII Utah Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 25, 2004.

*"Recognizing Israel: A Little Touch of Harry in the Night,"* featured speaker, Harry S. Truman Legacy Symposium: Truman and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East Conference, Key West, Florida, May 14, 2004.

*"The Positive Impacts of the Utah Campus Compact,"* featured speaker, Utah Conference on Volunteers, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 7, 2004.

“*The Snow College/Ephraim City Library: An Example of Collaborative Partnership*,” workshop presenter, American Council on Education, ACE Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., March 10, 2003.

“*The Power of Education*,” featured speaker, Utah Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 30, 2002.

“*Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*,” featured speaker, Harry S. Truman Library Institute Board of Directors, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri, September 18, 1998.

“*The Founding of Israel*,” keynote speaker, Jewish Federation of Kansas City, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri, September 9, 1998.

“*On Moral Grounds: President Harry S. Truman and the Birth of the State of Israel*,” keynote speaker, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, California, April 23, 1998.

“*Sympathy or Strategy: Harry S. Truman’s Recognition of Israel, May 1948*,” featured presenter, Hinckley Institute of Politics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, simulcast on KCPW (FM 88.3), 17 February 1998.

“*Harry S. Truman: The Modern-day Cyrus*,” featured speaker, Education Week, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994.

“*American Foreign Policy in the Middle East and Truman’s Decision to Recognize the State of Israel*,” Rotary Club of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel, May 1993 & 1994.

## **COURSES TAUGHT**

*Checks and Balances: The U.S. Congress and the Evolution of the U.S. Presidency*, Eastern Kentucky University

*Public Policy in the Non-profit Sector*, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame

*The President, Congress, the Constitution, and Foreign Policy*, Southern Utah University

*Capstone Course in Public Administration*, Southern Utah University

*International Conflict: The Middle East*, Southern Utah University

*International Relations*, Southern Utah University

*American National Government*, Snow College

*Introduction to International Relations*, Snow College

*Campaigns and the American Presidency*, University of Utah

*Introduction to International Politics*, University of Utah

*The U.S. Presidency*, University of Utah

*Theories of International Relations*, Brigham Young University

*Introduction to American History*, Utah Valley State College

## **PERSONAL**

Head Coach and Full Blue, University of Oxford Basketball Team, 1993-94

Member, University of Oxford Basketball Team, 1992-93

Member, Brigham Young University Basketball Team (JV), 1987-88

Voluntary Representative, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Rome, Italy, May 1984 to May 1986; fluent in spoken and written Italian

Competitive distance runner: completed Deseret News Marathon (fourth in age division), St. George Marathon (first in age division), and Boston Marathon (finished in top 15% of all registered runners); personal best: 2:41

Enjoy golf (10 handicap), travel, skiing, and music; trained as a classical pianist

Eagle Scout and Order of the Arrow, Boy Scouts of America

Married to Debi Woods Benson; five children: Emma, Samuel, Truman, Tatum, and Talmage

*Updated July 2017*