

After 20 years leading the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, Dean Douglas D. Anderson leaves behind more than buildings or rankings.

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He leaves a culture.

On any given day inside the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, students are pitching startups, solving analytics problems for corporate clients, preparing for international study experiences, competing in national finance competitions, or meeting one-on-one with career coaches about their future.

Twenty years ago, much of that infrastructure did not exist.

When Douglas D. Anderson became dean in 2006, the business school operated with limited resources, aging facilities, and a very different vision of what business education at Utah State University could become. Today, the Huntsman School is nearly unrecognizable from the one Anderson inherited.

Under his leadership, undergraduate enrollment grew from roughly 1,600 students to nearly 3,000. Scholarship support expanded from approximately \$200,000 annually to more than \$5 million per year. More than 100 faculty members were recruited during his tenure. Nearly \$88 million in facilities were built or renovated, including the transformation of the

George S. Eccles Business Building, the construction of Jon M. Huntsman Hall, and the opening of the Carolyn and Kem Gardner Learning and Leadership Building.

But Anderson rarely talks about buildings first. Instead, he talks about students. For two decades, Anderson repeated the same core idea so consistently that many around him can recite it from memory: the Huntsman School exists to be a “career accelerator” for students and an engine of growth for the community, the state, and the world, and that philosophy reshaped nearly every corner of the school.

Programs like the Analytics Solutions Center, the Center for Entrepreneurship, the Huntsman Scholar Program, Freshmen Academy, the Stephen R. Covey Leadership Center, and the FJ Management Center for Student Success all emerged from a larger belief that education should connect directly to opportunity, mentorship, leadership, and real-world experience.

“The young people who place their hopes for the future in our hands are some of this nation’s finest,” Anderson said. “Humble, curious, eager, honest, hardworking, and grateful. They are our greatest asset.”

That conviction traces back to Anderson’s own experience as a student.

Though deeply connected to Cache Valley through family roots, Anderson grew up primarily in Southern California after his parents moved there following their graduation from Utah State. He briefly attended Stanford before serving a church mission in Germany. When he returned home, financially stretched and uncertain about his next step, he enrolled at Utah State intending to stay only temporarily. But then he found something that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

At Utah State, professors knew students personally. They invested in students beyond the classroom, creating a sense of connection and belonging that left a lasting impression on Anderson.

After graduating, Anderson built an accomplished career. He earned graduate degrees from Harvard, spent nearly a decade on the faculty at Harvard Business School, and later co-founded a consulting firm focused on leadership and organizational strategy.

By 2005, he was running that business from Utah while serving as vice chair of the USU Board of Trustees. Becoming dean was never part of the plan.

In fact, when then-USU President Stan Albrecht first approached him about the role, Anderson initially declined. Just one day earlier, he and his business partners had signed a five-year commitment to remain with the firm.

As he wrestled with the decision in the weeks that followed, Anderson struggled with the timing and initially viewed it as a sign that the opportunity was not meant to happen. But during a conversation with a close friend while snowshoeing, his perspective shifted. The friend challenged him to stop thinking about whether the decision was convenient and instead consider whether it was the right thing to do.

When Anderson accepted the role, he brought with him a clear vision for the kind of business school he wanted to build. He drew heavily on his own experience as an undergraduate, deliberately prioritizing undergraduate education, mentorship, and career readiness over chasing the traditional prestige models embraced by many elite universities.

That vision was not universally embraced in the beginning.

“The first 10 years were all labor,” Anderson later reflected. “The last 10 have all been love.”

Transforming the Huntsman School required confronting long-standing assumptions, bureaucracy, and resistance to change. Anderson recalled that, especially in the early years, groups of colleagues regularly pushed back against the pace and scale of the transformation he was trying to create. He often joked with his wife, Kathy, that he was painting a “bullseye” on his chest, but despite the criticism, he never seriously considered stepping away. He remained deeply committed to the university and the school he believed could become something extraordinary. Throughout those years,

Kathy Anderson remained a steady and stabilizing presence, a partnership Anderson often described as the best decision he ever made.

From the beginning, Anderson believed Utah State did not need to imitate Harvard or Stanford to become exceptional. Instead, he believed the Huntsman School could distinguish itself by becoming extraordinary at undergraduate education and career preparation.

That philosophy led to difficult decisions early in his tenure, including eliminating doctoral programs so more resources could be directed toward undergraduate students. The school invested heavily in experiential learning, scholarships, advising, faculty recruitment, leadership development, and career readiness and over time, that strategy transformed the culture of the college.

That momentum accelerated through Anderson's partnership with philanthropist Jon M. Huntsman.

Over 17 months of conversations, Huntsman committed an initial \$26 million gift to rename the business school in 2007 which was a transformational moment not only financially, but culturally.

Anderson understood immediately that the impact extended beyond dollars.

"The enduring gift is the brand," he said.

The Huntsman name elevated the school's national visibility almost overnight, but Anderson consistently emphasized that the greater inheritance was not financial. It was philosophical.

"The values that [Jon Huntsman] stood for- service above self, hard work, generosity, and respect for the dignity of all people- these values have endowed our school with qualities of far greater value than the many millions he gave us," Anderson said during his final commencement address as dean.

The results of that long-term vision are now visible throughout the Huntsman School.

Students consistently place at the top of national competitions in finance, investing, sales, analytics, and entrepreneurship. The school's study abroad opportunities, leadership programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, and corporate partnerships have expanded dramatically. Nearly three-quarters of Huntsman undergraduates now receive some kind of scholarship or financial aid.

USU President Brad Mortensen said the scale of the transformation is immediately visible to anyone who experienced Utah State before and after Anderson's tenure.

"The leadership Doug Anderson has provided as the first dean of the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business is visible when comparing my time as a student at USU to today," Mortensen said. "This shows up not only in world-class facility improvements but, more importantly, in the positive influence that Huntsman School programs have on USU students."

Mortensen added that while the university will miss Anderson's entrepreneurial and creative leadership as dean, the culture and vision established during the Huntsman-Anderson partnership are positioned to endure.

For many students, Anderson's influence was felt most personally through mentorship.

Former student Breanna Beck remembers bonding with Anderson over their shared connection to Germany. Over time, the two met regularly in his office to discuss life, networking, future plans, and personal growth.

One piece of advice, especially, stayed with her.

"Stay in the questions business, not the answers business," Anderson told her.

"It reminded me of keeping my curiosity burning and alive," Beck said. "Because I asked questions and stayed curious, I had so many good experiences I would've never expected."

For alumnus Brent Jenson, Anderson's investment in students became especially clear during a study abroad trip to Rio de Janeiro, where Anderson and Kathy spent an evening dancing at a samba club alongside students.

"That night, I saw not just the dean, but a man who was genuinely invested in the student experience," Jenson said.

As Anderson prepared to step away from the deanship many of the themes that shaped his leadership resurfaced in his final commencement address to Huntsman School Class of 2026 graduates.

Standing before them just two months before his own transition back to the classroom, Anderson reflected on the mentors who had shaped his own life at Utah State, particularly economists Reed Durtschi and Delworth Gardner. He described accepting the role of dean as an opportunity to repay, "in some small part," the debt he owed to the university and to the teachers who had invested in him decades earlier.

He challenged graduates to think beyond professional achievement and consider how they would contribute to the lives of others and to future generations.

"Who are your 'Reed Durtschi's and Del Gardner's?'" Anderson asked graduates. "Think about the debt you owe them and USU and consider how you will want to pay it back."

The message reflected a philosophy that consistently shaped both Anderson's leadership and the culture of the Huntsman School itself: success carries responsibility.

That same theme emerged as Anderson reflected on Jon M. Huntsman's legacy during the address. He reminded graduates that Jon M. Huntsman measured success not by wealth accumulation, but by the positive impact a person could have on others. Anderson recalled Huntsman's desire to use his success to "alleviate human suffering and to create opportunities for others," values Anderson believed should remain central to the identity of the school bearing his name.

Near the conclusion of the address, Anderson invited the entire audience to repeat words that now appear inside Huntsman Hall itself:

"No exercise is better for the human heart than reaching down and lifting another up."

The line served as both a tribute to Jon M. Huntsman and a fitting summary of the values Anderson spent two decades trying to institutionalize within the Huntsman School.

In July 2026, after 20 years as dean, Anderson will transition back to the classroom.

Though he oversaw fundraising campaigns, construction projects, faculty recruitment, strategic growth, and national visibility, Anderson has always described himself first as an educator.

Even now, when reflecting on the future of the Huntsman School, he talks less about rankings or reputation than about sustaining culture.

"If we keep this culture alive," he said, "keep our focus clear about it and keep growing and investing and learning and changing and attracting good talent, it will be sustainable."

Others point not only to Anderson's strategic vision, but also to the spirit with which he led.

"For Dean Anderson, student success isn't just a slogan, it's everything," said Frank Caliendo, who will serve as interim dean following Anderson's departure. "Doug has spent the last 20 years building the very best student programs that he could imagine—programs that prepare students to tackle hard problems and find great success in life, programs that we want our own kids and grandkids to experience. I am truly humbled by the contributions of this legendary leader."

David Huntsman believes the transformation of the school reflects exactly the kind of leadership his father hoped to support.

“My father would be exceedingly proud of the progress that has been made under Dean Anderson,” Huntsman said. “Were he with us today, he would say he has never worked with a finer dean — and he worked with some great ones.”

“The entire Huntsman family is gratified and honored that Doug and his wife, Kathy, would devote 20 years of their lives to launch the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business at Utah State University,” he added. “They have made a wonderful and lasting contribution.”

The student-centered culture Anderson established now shapes the school’s programs, priorities, and identity. Because while buildings rise, enrollments fluctuate, and leadership transitions eventually occur, cultures have the potential to outlast all of them.

And after two decades, the culture Anderson helped create now defines the Huntsman School itself.