

Students No. 1 at Hinckley Institute

New director at U. says his passion is to work with collegians

By **Josh Loftin**

Deseret Morning News

Although he's worked with Sen. John McCain in his presidential campaign and provided a legal boost to President Bush's first election win — or more appropriately, the post-election legal victory in Florida — assisting major national politicians with presidential bids is not the group he prefers to help.

For Kirk Jowers, the new director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah, his real passion is working with students who are taking their first steps into politics — the ones searching for an internship or entry-level job in Washington, D.C., or those who are hoping to better understand the sometimes murky world of political policy.



Kirk L. Jowers

Jowers said that's why taking the helm of a political institute at a university, leaving a seemingly lucrative career as a legal consultant to high-powered politicians, corporations and activist groups. Additionally, as a Utah native and University of Utah graduate, Hinckley was the perfect fit.

"Utah is home, and I wanted to come back home," he said. "I love the Hinckley Institute, and can't think of anything I want to do more. It was the best part of my education. . . . There's a lot of opportunity, and there is nothing more rewarding than working with students."

While he is leaving behind a long list of important clients, he is not turning his back on the relationships he built while working in the nation's capital. Instead, he hopes to utilize them to attract some big names to the Utah campus, especially during the upcoming 40th anniversary of the institute, and send students to the best possible internships.

Jowers is not new to the institute, having served as its interim director since Ted Wilson left in 2003. The lengthy interim time was mostly due to the change in presidency at the university. Technically, Jowers will not start as the full-time director until August, although his appointment was announced in April and a reception welcoming him is planned for this evening at the Grand America Hotel.

Prior to coming to Hinckley, Jowers was a partner in the law firm of Caplin & Drysdale, where he specialized in political law. During that time, he worked as a legal consultant for McCain's 2000 presidential campaign, was part of Bush's legal team in Florida and also advised numerous clients on campaign finance laws and lobbying guidelines.

He has a law degree from Harvard Law School and a bachelor's degree from

the U.

The appointment of the independent-minded but Republican-leaning Jowers also introduces a different political leaning into the Hinckley Institute, which he acknowledged has carried a reputation as friendlier confines for Democratic philosophies. However, he said that partisanship will not be part of the institute's operations, and that he hopes to bring people in who are interested in learning about issues, not those who are simply wanting to toe a party line.

"My goal is for every student to want to come here to learn, whether they support Bush, Hillary or Nader," he said. "The partisanship is so crazy right now that anyone who crosses lines to do the right thing, that's the kind of person I respect. I want a government where people can speak honestly and debate the issues. And that's what I want for the Hinckley Institute."