

HIGHER ED MATTERS

Utah System of Higher Education, April 2013

Higher Education Impacts Regional Economic Prosperity

Utah is consistently ranked as a top state for businesses and is striving to become a center for technology jobs in the country. A recent report published by the Milliken Institute entitled, *A Matter of Degrees: The Effect of Educational Attainment on Regional Economic Prosperity*, documents the strong correlation between educational attainment and a region's economic performance.

The report looks at educational attainment data by occupation and industry in relation to income and gross domestic product in key metropolitan areas of the United States, including Provo-Orem and Salt Lake City-Ogden-Clearfield in Utah. In comparing degree attainment levels in these two metropolitan areas we see the percentage of the population holding a bachelor degree or higher has changed little since 1990 and yet the rank of these communities among other regions has declined significantly in that same time. This means other regions of the U.S. are outpacing Utah in increasing the proportion of their citizens who hold degrees.

While the report did not look at rural counties, USHE staff wanted to compare educational attainment for those Utah counties as well. According to Census estimates between 2006 and 2010, the percentage of Utahns in the 25 counties, not included in the report, who have completed some college or hold a bachelor's degree is one third of those in urban Utah, and half as many hold graduate degrees. These numbers indicate rural Utah is not enjoying the kind of economic prosperity created by a population with high levels of educational attainment.

The report found that a region's economic fortunes are closely tied to the quality and education levels of its workforce.

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SLC-Ogden-Clearfield	2010	2000	1990
Educational Attainment	Rank Out of 297 Metropolitan Areas		
HS Diploma	119	84	29
Some College (no degree)	49	36	18
Bachelor's Degree	85	86	55
Master's Degree	90	102	71

Provo-Orem	2010	2000	1990
Educational Attainment	Rank Out of 297 Metropolitan Areas		
HS Diploma	80	45	12
Some College (no degree)	7	3	1
Bachelor's Degree	50	49	28
Master's Degree	87	68	52

Key Findings:

- Education Increases Regional Prosperity: Adding one year to average years of schooling increases GDP by 10.5%.
- Better Educated, Bigger Benefits: The more highly educated the population, the larger the benefit is to the regional economy.
- Certain Industries Lead to Higher Returns: The returns to investment in education appear to be higher in some industries than others.
- Clusters Count: In metropolitan areas with clusters of high-skilled occupations, the share of workers with at least a master's degree is much higher than in areas without occupational clusters.

View the entire report at: matterofdegrees.net

A Matter of Degrees (continued)

The report also makes five policy recommendations focused on investing in higher education in order to enhance regional economic competitiveness.

- Make higher education more affordable.
- Make higher education more accessible.
- Increase higher education graduation rates.
- Strengthen coordination between higher education institutions and industries.
- Promote research and development.

These recommendations align with the policy priorities set by the Board of Regents and with the state's 66% goal. Overall, the report makes a compelling case for continued strategic investments in higher education in Utah.

Benson Selected to Lead EKU

Southern Utah University President Michael Benson has been named 12th president of Eastern Kentucky University. His tenure is to begin August 1, 2013.



"Michael Benson has had a significant impact on higher education in Utah over the past 12 years as president of two of our institutions, Snow College and then Southern Utah University," said Board of Regents Chair,

Bonnie Jean Beesley. "It has been a real pleasure to get to know him both personally and professionally, and I wish him well in this next phase of his career," she added.

During his tenure at SUU, President Benson has facilitated two of the largest financial donations in the University's history and helped further establish SUU as a regional arts destination. During his five years at Snow, Benson helped raise more money than in the previous 117 years of the institution's history combined.

"On behalf of the Utah System of Higher Education, I congratulate President Benson on this appointment. Mike helped shape both Snow College and Southern Utah University for the future. Personally, I have enjoyed working with Mike going back to his days as a Special Assistant to the President at the University of Utah, and wish him and Debi and their family well as they embark on this new adventure," said Commissioner Dave Buhler.

In the next few weeks the Board of Regents will appoint a search committee and commence a vigorous search for a new president of SUU. An interim president will also be named.

StepUP to Higher Education Promotes College Readiness

StepUp to Higher Education is the system's social awareness campaign to increase college participation among students in our state who may have never considered higher education as a viable option. Funded by the College Access Challenge Grant, the initiative focuses on awareness, professional development, and infrastructure to enhance college participation by partnering with secondary school staff and administration in reaching out to parents and students.

In March, StepUp Utah held four regional college nights, in collaboration with all eight USHE institutions, in Ogden, Orem, St. George, and Taylorsville to provide information about applying to and attending college, as well as options in paying for an education. The four events were very well-attended, averaging 200 people each night.



Prospective college students & their parents attend workshops & visit information booths at StepUP Utah's college nights.