

USHE Weekly Legislative Report

Sixth Week: March 4-8, 2013

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Commissioner of Higher Education

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This is the sixth weekly report for 2013 on the legislative session from the perspective of the Utah System of Higher Education, for distribution to Regents, Presidents, and Trustees.

2013-2014 Budget. The big news of the week was the approval late Friday afternoon by the Executive Appropriations Committee of additions to the base budget. (The base budget was adopted earlier in the session.) The approved list will be incorporated in an appropriations bill to be considered early this week. Although it is not final until adopted, their recommendations mostly follow needs prioritized by the Board of Regents including the following on-going Higher Education funding: \$18 million for Mission Based funding (split evenly between Distinctive Mission initiatives and Equity), \$10 million (\$6.5 million in year one) for additional slots at University of Utah Medical School (see SB 42 below), and \$1.5 million for Dixie State University implementation status. Also approved was partial funding for 1% compensation increases (specifically for the state share for health insurance and retirement increases, totaling \$6.5 million). So far, no funding has been allocated for the 66% initiative, proposed at \$20 million in tax funds.

The committee also recommended one-time money for higher education: \$1 million for growth in Regents' Scholarship, \$600,000 for Technology Intensive Concurrent Enrollment (TICE), \$1 million for a performance funding initiative envisioned by Higher Education Chair Sen. Steve Urquhart, \$3 million for PhD. programs at Utah State University, \$2.5 million for Huntsman Cancer Institute, \$300,000 for the Utah Museum of Natural History, \$250,000 for the Walker Institute at Weber State University and \$300,000 for the computer crime lab at Dixie State University.

Although not part of the Higher Education budget, of interest are committee recommendations of \$3 million for USTAR (with an additional \$2 million in one-time funds) and \$2 million one-time for the Utah Shakespeare Festival. It is unclear to what extent all available new revenue has been allocated—there may still be opportunities for some additional modest funding increases. Final numbers will be available after conclusion of the legislative session on Thursday.

Capital Budget. The Executive Appropriations Committee also recommended funding for the Regents' top two priorities: \$54 million for a new classroom building at Utah Valley University, and \$3.5 million for design of a new science building at Weber State University. Also included is \$46 million in one-time funding to increase state expenditures on capital improvements (Higher Education institutions traditionally receive a large share of these funds due to the extent of our capital facilities).

The Legislative Session will conclude by Midnight, Thursday, March 14. A report on the 7th week of the session will be prepared by Monday with a final report at the Board of Regents' meeting on March 29.

Key Legislation of Interest to USHE

- **HB 139 (1st Sub.) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Action Center** by Rep. Val Peterson, creates educational programs for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in public education. USHE has not taken a formal position on the bill; however, certain provisions clearly support the Board's positions on academic rigor, preparedness and access. The bill passed the full House and is awaiting further consideration in the Senate.
- **HB 340, Snow College Economic Development and Workforce Preparation Advisory Committee*** by Rep. Kay L. McIff, would modify the duties of Technical Education Advisory Committee to assess the economic development needs of central Utah and advise Snow College on how the college can improve the effectiveness of its efforts to assist business, industry, and local government to help expand economic activity. The bill awaits consideration by the Senate.
- **SB 42 (1st sub.), Medical School Admissions Funding*** by Sen. John Valentine, authorizes the University of Utah School of Medicine to increase the number of students admitted by 40 students for a total of 122 students annually; and restricts the 40 additional admissions to students who demonstrate a strong connection to Utah. The bill passed the full Senate unanimously and the House Health Committee this past week, awaiting consideration by the full House.
- **SB 51 (1st Sub.), Higher Education Tuition Waivers*** by Sen. Stephen Urquhart, removes the cap on the number of waivers allotted to institutions of higher education for nonresident students who meet certain academic and admission requirements; and extends alumni legacy nonresident scholarships at institutions of higher education to grandchildren of alumni. This bill passed the House and Senate last week and awaits the Governor's signature.
- **SB 100, Higher Education Scholarship Amendments*** by Sen. Jerry Stevenson, makes modifications to the Regents' and New Century scholarship programs to streamline the application process, raise standards to improve completion, and addresses concerns raised by constituents. This bill passed the House and Senate last week and awaits the Governor's signature.
- **SB 175, Assessment of College Readiness*** by Sen. Howard Stephenson, requires K-12 school to administer college readiness assessments which include a college admissions test that is most commonly submitted to local universities (e.g. ACT or SAT). USHE supports this bill as it streamlines the assessment of college readiness of high school students. The bill passed the House Education Committee and is up for consideration by the full House.
- **SB 258, Rename Utah State University – College of Eastern Utah*** by Sen. David Hinkins, modifies state statute to change the name of *Utah State University – College of Eastern Utah* to *Utah State University Eastern*. This change was approved by the Board in February. The bill passed the Senate and is awaiting further consideration by the House.
- **SCR 5, Concurrent Resolution Endorsing the Utah Education Excellence Commission*** by Sen. Jerry Stevenson, expresses strong support for achieving the goal that 66% of Utah's adults will hold a postsecondary degree or certificate by the year 2020; expresses the Legislature's determination to work with the Governor and Utah's education stakeholders to achieve the 66% goal through increased innovation and investment. This bill passed the Senate unanimously and is awaiting further consideration in the House.

* USHE has taken an official position in support; ** USHE has taken an official position in opposition.

For more information on legislation, committee agendas, or to view or listen to floor debates, see: <http://le.utah.gov/>
Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs Spencer Jenkins contributed to this report.