

January 15, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Completion Initiatives and "15 to Finish"

Background

In July 2013, the Board of Regents unanimously passed a resolution to "Implement Strategies to Increase Completion Rates in Support of the 66% Goal." This resolution acknowledged that the Utah State Board of Regents is committed to improving the completion rates of students who enroll in an institution within the Utah System of Higher Education by ensuring a quality, cost-effective educational experience and awarding meaningful education credentials that will help students find gainful employment and life-long success. The Presidents and their administrations and faculty have taken seriously the Board's charge and have been implementing these strategies. The five specific recommendations to institutional presidents are:

1. *Establish 15 credits hours per semester as the normal full-time course load for students. Institutions are strongly encouraged to promote the recommended course load and ensure their own top scholarship requirements define 15 credit hours/semester as full time, no later than the 2014-2015 academic year.*
2. *Set plateau tuition levels with a focus on 12 to 15 credit hours to help students maximize their tuition dollars and their time. Institutions are strongly encouraged to promote the advantages of taking more than 12 credit hours per semester as a way to complete a degree one year earlier.*
3. *Create semester-by-semester degree program maps with specific recommended courses each semester and make them available to current and potential students, ensure they are updated regularly to help students stay on track to finish their degrees on time and better enable institutions to maximize course scheduling availability for students.*
4. *For students who have not already met general education math requirements in high school, (1) encouraging students to enroll in an appropriate mathematics course in their first year of college, (2) encouraging institutions to adopt a strategy to transition students from developmental to credit-bearing math within three semesters, (3) marketing Math 1050 as a preferred concurrent enrollment option for high school seniors.*
5. *During the next year the Chief Academic Officers, Chief Student Services Officers and institutions are charged with exploring the feasibility of implementing reverse transfer/stackable credentials where students who complete the requirements for an associate degree are automatically awarded the degree, by institutions that award associate degrees, without an application (or fee). This may include the feasibility of a policy allowing for the "reverse transfer" of credits where academic credit for*

*coursework completed at a four year university are transferred back to a transfer student's previous college to satisfy credentials such as a certificate or associate degree program requirements.*

The resolution also called on Presidents to report their progress to the Board in January and July of 2014. The summary of those reports is attached.

Some general remarks on the initiatives and the progress made to date are in order.

- The USHE "15 to Finish" campaign launched on 22 October 2013, including a website, video (available on YouTube), and institutional companion sites. The USHE "15 to Finish" video played on video screens at five institutions: WSU, SUU, Snow, DSU, and UVU. These institutions also distributed posters, and promoted "15 to Finish" on their institutional websites.
  - The video was viewed more than 1000 times.
  - The "15 to Finish" Facebook ads reached nearly 31,000 people.
- There is only limited reporting on plateau tuition in the attached, because seven USHE institutions previously implemented plateau tuition.

Next steps:

- Continue progress in implementing each of the five strategies.
- Continue to improve and update semester-by-semester guides in graduation maps.
- Involve enrollment management in the math initiative to ensure that enough seats in the appropriate math courses are available for students. Move innovative math instructional models from the pilot stage to widespread implementation.
- Continue to employ other best practices to boost completion rates, including: improved intrusive and/or required advising; first year experience programs; expansion of summer programs; improved leave of absence policies; general education pathways, cohorts, and pre-majors; early alert programs; mentoring by staff and faculty; and learning communities.

#### Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only, no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information in this memorandum. Note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Completion strategic objective.

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David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/CLF  
Attachment

## January 2014 Board of Regents Completion Update

In July 2012 the State Board of Regents adopted a resolution encouraging the implementation of five proven strategies to improve college completion. Each institution has been working to implement these strategies. The resolution also requested that each president submit a report to the Board in January and July 2014 on their progress. This document summarizes the institutional reports for each of the five strategies.

### 1. *Establish 15 credits hours per semester as the normal full-time course load for students.*

- **University of Utah**  
"Plan to Finish" encourages students to take 30 credits/year. Block U provides a thematic, cohort-based path to complete General Education in one year, using 15 credits/semester.
- **Utah State University**  
USU will begin promoting the "15 to Finish" campaign in January 2014.
- **Weber State University**  
Played "15 to Finish" ads on video screens across campus; promoted through online student access center. Advisors encourage students to take 15 credits, where appropriate. The "Tri-Semester" academic calendar allows students to more easily complete 30 credits in one year.
- **Southern Utah University**  
Launched a robust "15 to Finish" campaign during registration. Website specified benefits of taking 15 credits; lawn signs reminded students to take more credits.
- **Snow College**  
Majority of students already take 15 credits/semester. Major guides are based on completing at least 15 credits/semester.
- **Dixie State University**  
Using social media, student newspaper, banners, and tv screens across campus to promote "15 to Finish." Advisors are now recommending that students enroll in at least 15 credit hours.
- **Utah Valley University**  
First institution in the state to launch a "15 to Finish" campaign and accompanying website. Course planning website defaults to 15 credits/semester. Students engage in 4-year planning.
- **Salt Lake Community College**  
Emphasizing 15 credits during advising and new student orientation.

### 1a. *Institutions are strongly recommended to ensure their own top scholarship requirements define 15 credit hours per semester as full time no later than the 2014-2015 academic year.*

Institutions that have implemented 15 credits/semester for at least some scholarships:

- U of Utah
- WSU
- SUU
- Snow
- DSU
- UVU
- USU investigating requiring 15 credits for the highest academic scholarships.
- SLCC President's and Deans' List require that recipients have taken 15 credits/semester.

### 2. *Set plateau tuition focused on 12-15 credit hours.*

- 7 institutions already provide plateau tuition: USU, WSU, SUU, Snow, DSU, UVU, SLCC.

USU will change plateau tuition from 13-18 to 12-18 credit hours effective Summer 2014. Online courses will now be counted toward the plateau. U of Utah exploring the move to plateau tuition, perhaps piloting in summer with Block U.

### 3. *Create accessible graduation maps for each major with specific recommended courses each semester.*

- U of Utah has created four-year plans for all majors (outside of the Honors College). These plans will be added to the catalog by the end of January 2014 and will be revised for 2014-2015.
- USU colleges with completed four-year plans: Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering, and Science. Agriculture and Arts should be complete by end of the academic year; Education and Human Services and Huntsman School of Business will be starting the process soon.

## January 2014 Board of Regents Completion Update

- WSU departments are working on graduation maps, and will include maps for students who must start with developmental math and English.
  - SUU is using a software tool, "DegreeWorks," for updating degree maps and monitoring student progress, although some versions of graduation maps are available on department websites.
  - Snow is in the process of updating degree maps (called "Major Guides"). They are also emphasizing articulation agreements to highlight "seamless transfer" to a 4-year institution.
  - DSU added degree mapping in the 2013-2014 catalog. By Fall 2014, degree maps will be created for evening degree programs and milestones will monitor student progress during their first year. In Fall 2014, Degree Compass will help students select a program of study that matches their talents.
  - UVU is in the process of putting existing paper 4-year degree maps into their version of DegreeWorks, "Wolverine Track." This process should be complete by April 2015. The 2014-2015 catalog will include degree maps, and departments are beginning to put them on their websites.
  - SLCC has created and published semester-by-semester graduation maps as part of their catalog and program advising sheets.
4. *Encourage students to take math earlier and improve transitions from developmental to for-credit math.*
- U of Utah "flipped" delivery of all Math 1010 courses starting Fall 2013, increasing success rate.
  - USU students enrolled in a math course are automatically pre-registered for next successive math class. A pilot of Math 1010 and Stats (Math) 1040 is in progress, as is the development of modular, self-paced materials available to students preparing for the math placement exam.
  - WSU increased pass and success rates by limiting the time that students have to complete courses; implementing a "Fast Track" to move students through developmental math more quickly; instituting a "flipped" delivery for math courses. Pass rates are 7-19% higher than in the traditional class.
  - SUU established a policy requiring all students to complete General Education within 60 credits, including math.
  - Snow's Math Redesign provides one-on-one instruction and permits students to complete developmental math more quickly, with a pass rate of about 76%. Nearly half of Math 1010 Redesign students enrolled in Math 1050 & 20% of Math 950 students completed 2 courses.
  - DSU advisors are encouraging students to take math in their first year and a new math technology lab enables students to prepare for Math 1050 using an emporium model with face-to-face assessment and assistance.
  - UVU's structured enrollment requires that students take developmental courses immediately until Math 1010 (and English 1010) are completed. Students then complete Math 1030/1040/1050 in their sophomore year. Due to the work of the K-16 Alliance, 48% of high school students from their service area placed directly into Math 1030/1040/1050.
  - SLCC created the College Preparatory Math Emporium (CPME) to allow students to move quickly through competency-based modules on their path to credit-bearing math. The pilot identified problems with fractions, resulting in a revised pedagogy in Spring 2014. SLCC is also piloting the waiving of pre-requisites for Math 1030 for a select group of students.

5. *Explore feasibility of implementing reverse transfer policies.*

The institutions have started working on this issue, and have—among other things—drafted a list of questions and concerns to be addressed. These include credit thresholds, division of labor, outreach efforts, and data processes. We will use the Spring 2014 Complete College Utah meeting to further identify and address some of these issues and expect to report progress at the July Board meeting.

- UVU created a process to automatically award an AS degree and waived the graduation fee for a 2-year degree, resulting in a 41% increase in applications.
- Approximately 100 students are in a pilot reverse transfer initiative with SLCC and USU.