

July 9, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents  
FROM: David L. Buhler  
SUBJECT: USHE Completion Grants

Background

The Utah State Board of Regents set a goal to have 66 percent of the Utah population with a postsecondary certificate or degree by the year 2020. In aid of this goal, the State Board of Regents adopted a resolution in July 2013 encouraging the implementation of five proven strategies to improve college completion. Each institution has been working to implement these strategies. To further their work to increase completion rates, implement the strategies, and achieve their goal, the Utah System of Higher Education created the ***USHE Completion Grants***.

These one-time grants were designed to support and scale projects that have been developed and tested as pilots at the institutions, specifically projects working to achieve the Board of Regents' Completion Initiatives.

1. *Establish 15 credits hours per semester as the normal full-time course load for students.*
2. *Set plateau tuition levels with a focus on 12 to 15 credit hours to help students maximize their tuition dollars and time.*
3. *Create semester-by-semester degree program maps with specific recommended courses each semester and make them available to current and potential 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. *Explore the feasibility of implementing reverse transfer/stackable credentials.*

Issue

Institutions were invited to apply for grants up to \$40,000, with a 100 percent match required. Grant monies were to be used for:

- Infrastructure, including hardware, software, and website development;
- Marketing materials;
- Consultants or site visits;
- Mentors or peers explicitly working to further one of the five initiatives;
- Other expenses incurred to expand pilot projects to full-scale, institution-wide implementation.

**Grant time line:**

RFP released (official announcement)	April 30, 2014
RFP due date	May 30, 2014
RFP selection announcement	June 23, 2014
1 <sup>st</sup> Disbursement of funds	August 1, 2014
1 <sup>st</sup> report due	December 1, 2014
2 <sup>nd</sup> Disbursement of funds	January 5, 2015
Written report on grant results	Fall 2015

Grantees will be required to share results of their grants with the Complete College Utah teams at the Spring 2015 meeting. Initial sharing of the successful grant proposals may also occur in the Fall 2014 meeting. Institutional presidents will present incremental and final reports to the Council of Presidents.

**All eight USHE institutions applied for and received a USHE Completion Grant.**

University of Utah \$39,500

"Plan to Finish"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: 15 to Finish; math*

Part of the Plan to Finish campaign, "BlockU" is an innovative first-year experience in which students enroll in 15 credit hours for each of the two semesters. Successful completion of a BlockU program can clear all of a student's general education requirements. Participating students will receive vouchers for math tutoring services, encouraging successful completion of math.

The University of Utah will:

- Develop resources to engage parents in supporting their student in the Plan to Finish Initiative;
- Create an enrollment culture of registering for 15 credits/semester through participation in BlockU;
- Promote completion of math (QA) in the first year of enrollment through financial support for success.

Utah State University \$40,000

"Aggie Road to Success Program"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: reverse transfer/stackable credentials*

Increase AA/AS graduates on the main and regional campuses by 40 percent by May of 2015. The program will target:

- Students who stopped out in last two years, are within 15 credits of completing their associate degree, and have completed their quantitative literacy requirement;
- Students who are currently enrolled and have met the requirements to earn an AA/AS and are working toward a bachelor's degree;

- Students who are current enrolled with GPAs below 2.30 who have earned 30 credit hours.

Weber State University \$37,968

"Smart Graduation Planner"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: graduation maps*

WSU will create an on-line tool for students to determine in which courses students should enroll, based on their:

- major
- previous college credit
- selected semester
- credit intensity
- recommended specific courses

Program will be developed by Department of Computer Science faculty and students.

To be fully implemented by Fall 2015.

Southern Utah University \$40,000

"University Remediation Assistance"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: math*

SUU will expand and improve an existing program that targets applicants who do not meet the SUU selective admission standards. The SUU College Connections Success course and Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) will be doubled in order to assist students in:

- meeting the Quantitative Literacy requirement earlier and in a more supported environment;
- match the fall-to-fall persistence rate for the general population of 65%.

Snow College \$17,986

"Speeding Up Completion and Success of Developmental to College-Level Math"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: math*

Snow College will draw upon its successful pilot of the *ILearnMath* project. They will:

- expand "project days" for STEM students enrolled in developmental math;
- create a project database that can be shared state-wide;
- provide a course for non-STEM majors that will speed progress through developmental math and allow them to be ready for Math 1030 or 1040 in only semester, thus enabling completion of developmental math and college-level math in one year.

The weekly "project days" bring together all of the students in the program for a project related to every day math applications, study skills, or areas that require extra assistance.

Dixie State University \$40,000

"Student Success Center Mentors"

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: 15 to Finish; degree maps; math*

DSU will hire student mentors to work in their Student Success Center. They expect to:

- increase percentage of students taking 15 or more credits by 5 percent;
- present *Finish in Four* to 80 percent of "at risk" freshmen through a 1-on-1 meeting;

- provide at least 75 percent of student body with physical degree map and 100 percent with electronic version;
- increase number of students pre-registering for transitional math by 25 percent.

Utah Valley University \$40,000

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COLLEGE SCHEDULER®

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: 15 to Finish; degree maps*

College Scheduler® will facilitate increased course registrations by providing students with a better way to explore options to fill a 15-credit schedule. The program allows students to enter times unavailable for class, such as work hours. The program will:

- help students graduate on-time by increasing credit hours per student and decreasing “filler” classes;
- provide real-time reporting so that administrators can see what courses are in high demand;
- reduce time advisors need to spend assisting students with registration, thus increasing time for quality advising.

Software will be ready for Spring 2015 registration.

Salt Lake Community College \$28,000\*

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School of Technical Studies (STS) stackable credentials

*Board of Regents' Initiatives addressed: stackable credentials*

Each program in the STS has very specific, sequential maps to achieve either a certificate or a degree.

Implementing the Student Success pathway in the STS, a program already in place in other schools at SLCC, to encourage students to complete a Certificate of Completion, which then stacks to an AAS degree. Plan includes marketing materials and a new website, with a goal to graduate seven students in each new Certificate of Completion.

\*Amount pending. May be increased.

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 memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation and Completion strategic objectives.

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David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

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