

March 18, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents
FROM: David L. Buhler
SUBJECT: HB 198 Strengthening College and Career Counseling

Background

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) College and Career Counseling Initiative is a multi-state consortium that works to increase the knowledge and skills of professionals who advise students on reaching their postsecondary aspirations. A key program component is a series of training modules, called Strategies in College and Career Counseling (CCCI), for professional development of school counselors. In 2011, Assistant Commissioner Kincart decided to purchase a state license from to the Southern Regional Education Board to strengthen Utah's College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) professional development objective.

Traditionally, school counseling master's degree programs have not included in-depth college and career counseling training. However, in 2012, the Utah System of Higher Education brought together various stakeholders to customize SREB's training modules with Utah content, and they have been infused into Utah's pre-service and professional development training programs at both the University of Utah (UU) and Utah State University (USU) – the two state institutions that offer a Masters in School Counseling degree. Prior to this, implementation of CCCI in the southern region had primarily been in the professional development arena for existing school counselors.

While more recent program graduates have received this training, many practicing school counselors are lacking these more targeted college and career counseling skills. Additionally, some of our school counselors completed their training from out-of-state or online programs which may not have this college and career ready emphasis.

In order to fill this need, with support of the CACG, Utah State University and the University of Utah developed in-service curriculum based on the SREB modules and offered the course for college credit to 114 counselors from various districts across the state during 2013-2014. In January 2015, the USHE-sponsored StepUP Ready Grant program made possible by a legislative appropriation, funded initiatives for USU and UU to offer the SREB course tuition-free to 175 school counselors (and some teachers in Iron district) located in eight school districts by the end of December 2015. Requirements for course completers in the USU grant include submitting a plan for implementing a College and Career Readiness (CCR) Action

Plan, while the UU partnership is creating a series of administrator training workshops to promote strong working relationships with counselors to complement the college and career counseling training.

Issue

HB 198 Strengthening College and Career Counseling builds upon our groundbreaking work in preservice counselor training and requires the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) to collaborate with the Utah Board of Regents, educational entities, and business/industry partners to create a certificate program for working school counselors, increasing their competencies in college and career readiness counseling.

This bill funds the implementation of a 120-hour College and Career Readiness Certificate program for 600 practicing school counselors. Two new modules would be developed and added to the SREB curriculum. Counselors with prior CCCI coursework could waive the 4 SREB modules. Qualifying districts and charters would apply for funds to cover the cost of counselors' coursework, and participants would be required to submit an action plan for implementation in schools after completion of certificate coursework.

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 and review the attached *Deseret News* article, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation strategic objective.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/MMK
Attachment

Deseret News

More college and career training needed for school counselors, lawmakers say

By Morgan Jacobsen , Deseret News

Published: Monday, March 2 2015 11:39 a.m. MST



Utah lawmakers are hoping to better equip school counselors with the knowledge and skills necessary to help students prepare for college and beyond. (Shutterstock)

SALT LAKE CITY — School counselors are trained to help students graduate from high school. But Utah lawmakers are hoping to better equip school counselors with the knowledge and skills necessary to help students prepare for college and beyond.

[HB198](#) would appropriate a \$440,000 grant from the education fund to create an online training program to certify counselors as "highly skilled" at providing college and career counseling,

helping students enroll in necessary courses and find scholarships where available.

"Just like we want to have a teacher who's up to date on math or science and have specific training there, we want to make sure that our counselors have specific training in college and career readiness," bill sponsor Rep. Patrice Arent, D-Millcreek, said Monday.

The bill requires the Utah State Office of Education to collaborate with the Utah State Board of Regents, industry partners and other stakeholders to develop the 120-hour program for working counselors who choose to participate.

The one-time funding appropriation would be enough to enroll about 600 counselors. If demand for the program is high, the Legislature may consider appropriating additional funds, Arent said.

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865623219/More-college-and-career-training-needed-for-school-counselors-lawmakers-say.html>

She said the training program needs to be developed on the state level because many school districts don't have the resources to create one locally, and funds appropriated through the weighted pupil unit are already spoken for in many cases.

"This cannot be done on a local basis," Arent said.

Melissa Kincart, assistant commissioner for outreach and access at the Utah System of Higher Education, said Utah schools need more counselors who are up to date on the most effective ways for students to navigate college pathways.

"We need more students to come to the Utah System of Higher Education and our other colleges and universities more ready to actually be there," Kincart said. "We are excited about this bill, that it invests in professional development for school counselors, provides them the training and resources that they need, and also invests in the certification."

Jerre Holmes, superintendent of the North Summit School District, said he's seen a strong desire from school counselors to further their abilities to help students through important steps toward college completion and successful employment.

"You can see the preparation that's gone into this (bill), counselors leading the charge who want to be better. It's their opportunity to serve our kids better as they transition from public education to higher education," Holmes said.

The bill has already passed the House and was unanimously recommended by the Senate Education Committee on Monday. It will now be considered by the full Senate.

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