

November 4, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: USHE Completion Report

Background

Since July 2013, when the Board of Regents passed its Completion Resolution, institutions and Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) staff have been working to implement it and to increase the completion/graduation rate at USHE institutions. Specifically, the Board's Resolution made five recommendations to institutions:

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 their 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. Encourage students to enroll in an appropriate mathematics course in their first year of college.
5. Explore the feasibility of implementing reverse transfer/stackable credentials.

Issue

To report on the efforts made by the institutions and the state to increase the number of Utahns with post-secondary credentials, USHE created a Completion Report that summarizes the Board Resolution and the progress made thus far in achieving the state's goals.

The report outlines in an easy-to-read way Utah's college completion problem, the steps that the institutions are taking to improve college completion, and the results to date. For example, the report notes that only about two in five USHE students complete their degree within 150% of time (6 years), and that full-time students are four times as likely to earn an associate degree and three times as likely to earn a bachelor's degree than are part-time students.

The report also describes the "15 to Finish" campaign, which targets the one in three USHE students taking 12-14 credits, who could graduate on time by taking the right additional course each semester. These students lose \$35,000 in lost wages and total cost of attendance by taking an additional year to graduate. During each registration period (fall, spring, summer), USHE purchases targeted digital ads, which have been viewed more than 540,000 times encouraging full-time enrollment. These ads, alongside institutional

efforts, are showing slow but steady gains in credit intensity in both 15 credits per semester and 30 credits per year.

The last page of the report showcases the USHE Completion Grants, which each institution used to help accomplish their completion goals in mission-driven ways. These grant descriptions are keyed to the five initiatives from the Board of Regents' Completion Resolution.

Next Steps

This report will be updated at least bi-annually to show the progress USHE institutions are making on improving completion rates.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action is required.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/CF
Attachment



UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION



College Completion in Utah

2015 Overview

Utah lags the nation when it comes to students completing college.

College educated citizens make Utah's economy stronger. The Utah System of Higher Education wants to make sure that every student can get a meaningful credential in a timely manner. That means taking enough credits each semester, taking the right classes, and building upon strong academic preparation in high school.

In 2013, the Board of Regents passed a College Completion Resolution, outlining five initiatives based in research and best practices, designed to help Utah students achieve their goals. This report outlines those five initiatives and the progress we've made so far.



**Only about two in five
USHE students complete
their degree within 150%
of time.**

FULL-TIME STUDENTS

at Utah's colleges are
4x as likely to earn an
associate degree &
3x as likely to earn a
bachelor's degree when
compared to

PART-TIME STUDENTS

Completion Initiatives

The July 2013 Completion Resolution passed by the Utah State Board of Regents encourages the implementation of five key strategies to improve college completion in the state.

1

Establish 15 credits per semester as full-time

4

Encourage students to enroll in the appropriate math course their first year

2

Set plateau tuition levels, focusing on 12-15 credits

5

Explore the feasibility of implementing reverse transfer/stackable credentials

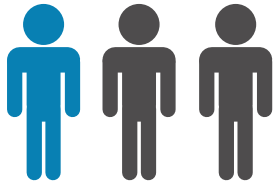
3

Create semester-by-semester degree program maps with sepecific recommended courses

15 to Finish



In June of 2013 USHE launched the 15 to Finish campaign as part of its Completion Initiative. This campaign encourages students to take at least 15 credits per semester in order to graduate on time. This campaign targets the 37% of USHE students who take 12-14 credits per semester, and could cut a year off of their time to graduation by just taking one more class per semester.



About one in three
USHE students
takes 12-14 credits
per semester

\$35k

Cost of attending
college one extra
year (wages + total
cost of attendance)

>540k

Views of the 15 to Finish
Utah campaign video during
2014-15.

15^{to} FINISH™ | FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
15TOFINISHUTAH.COM

Plateau Tuition



Seven of the eight USHE colleges and universities have instituted plateau tuition, with an emphasis on 12 to 15 credits. That one extra class adds up to a free year of college. USHE institutions have plateau tuition in the following ranges:

Utah State University
12-18 credits

Dixie State University
12-20 credits

Weber State University
11-18 credits

Utah Valley University
12-18 credits

Southern Utah University
10-18 credits

Salt Lake Community College
12-18 credits

Snow College
10-20 credits

Math



Approximately 40% of college students are placed in remedial courses. USHE institutions are devising innovative ways to help students with math and to encourage students to take math as soon as they arrive on campus, rather than waiting.

For example:

- Multiple data points help place students in correct courses.
- Web-based refresher material for placement exams.
- Students in “fast track” programs move through course modules at their own pace.
- In “flipped” classrooms, students solve problems during class time, with the professor’s help.
- Co-requisites allow students to complete two math courses in a single semester.

43%

Of recent HS grads completed the math requirement during their first year in college



Students who took math their first year in college (including remedial math) are **3x** more likely to pass credit-bearing math within 5 years

USHE Math Recommendations

In spring 2014, USHE published high school math recommendations, detailing which math courses would best prepare high school students for college. These include completing Utah high school graduation requirements and taking four years of progressive math, along with specific recommended courses for students headed for a STEM major.



Learn more about the USHE Math Recommendations at StepUpUtah.com, the USHE site for college prep and success for students, parents and school counselors

Graduation Maps



Students have a dizzying array of options when they register for courses, and the course catalog may be overwhelming. Graduation maps help students make sense of requirements to stay on track to finish their degrees on time and help institutions know which courses to offer when.

90%

of degree programs at USHE institutions have up-to-date graduation maps



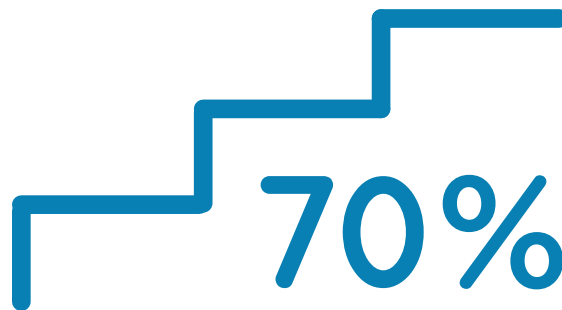
Graduation maps improve completion rates and cut down on unnecessary excess credits

Reverse Transfer/Stackable Credentials



Students who are awarded an associate degree are more likely to stay in school and finish a four-year degree program, so Utah is making associate degrees a priority. Students can earn an associate degree on their way to a bachelor's degree, and students who transfer with enough credits can also earn their associate degree at the two-year institution, even after transferring, through reverse transfer.

Once a student completes a credential, that shouldn't be the end. USHE institutions are working to ensure that all certificates can count or "stack" toward an associate degree, and all AA/AS degrees also "stack" with four-year degrees.



Students are taking advantage of the stackable credential model: the number of certificates awarded at Salt Lake Community College increased 70% from 2012/13 to 2013/14.

USHE Completion Grants



USHE awarded completion grants to support and encourage institutional work in increasing completion rates on their campuses. Each utilized one or more of the five key strategies in the USHE Completion Initiative.



University of Utah

Expanded Plan to Finish Initiative by developing resources to engage parents, creating an enrollment culture of registering for 15 credits per semester, and promoting completion of math in the first year through financial support for success.



Utah State University

Increased the number of students obtaining associate degrees through a promotional campaign and incentives including waived re-admission fees and peer-to-peer phone campaigns.



Weber State University

Created the Smart Graduation Planner, a web-based course selection tool that shows students which courses to take each semester, following the shortest path to graduation.



Southern Utah University

Created a Focus Interest Group (FIG) for College Connections students that includes remedial math, general education, and an anchor class to encourage students to start math right away and to increase retention rate of at-risk students.



Snow College

Expanding a successful pilot to allow students in STEM and non-STEM fields who place into remedial math to complete college-level math in one year. Created a searchable database for hands-on class projects for students to apply math concepts.



Dixie State University

Expanded the outreach of its Student Success Center and built on existing retention initiatives. Hired eight student mentors, added four computers, and targeted 350 at-risk freshmen.



Utah Valley University

Purchased College Scheduler, a simple and user-friendly tool to help students search schedule options and register for classes. The roll out was a resounding success and UVU is now in stage two of implementation, and has recommended adoption to other USHE institutions.