

September 7, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Institutional Completion Update: Utah State University

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 (USHE) 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 Utah System of Higher Education provided USHE Completion Grants in 2014 to support and scale projects that the institutions had developed to help them meet the implicit goals in the 2013 Board of Regents’ Completion Resolution.

In January 2015, institutions reported their three- and five-year goals regarding college completion overall and the specific initiatives in the Resolution to the Board of Regents. Briefly, the five specific recommendations in the resolution are:

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

As a follow-up to these efforts, the members of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee requested at their January 2015 meeting that institutions report in more depth on their practices and policies that are having the most impact regarding college completion. Institutions have been asked to highlight two areas:

- one of the five strategies outlined in the resolution for which they have gained momentum, and
- one institution-led area for which they are demonstrating impact in retention or completion.

Representatives from the host institution, Utah State University, will report on their initiatives to increase completion rates at the September 2016 Board of Regents meeting.

Next Steps

Over the course of the year, all remaining institutions will have a chance to report on their successful strategies to the Committee.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to congratulate the institutions on the progress they are making toward meeting their institutional completion goals.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JH