

March 23, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Report on Utah Higher Education Staff Association Completion Initiative: bff (Bring a Friend to Finish – Return, Learn, and Earn)

Issue

As referenced in *Utah: A State of Opportunity, Utah State Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2025*, Utah leads the nation in the percentage of its population with “some college, no degree,” but Utah should aspire to lead the nation, as it once did, in the percentage of its population with a college degree.

As a complement to institutional strategies and the Board of Regents’ ten-year plan to increase completion rates, the Utah Higher Education Staff Association (UHESA) has launched a united service initiative to reach out to their friends in their respective communities who did not complete a college degree and offer to serve as networking mentors. From custodial staff to enrollment specialists, UHESA staff know the connections students need to succeed.

Background

UHESA is comprised of 25,000+ staff members of the USHE institutions and is led by delegates/representatives of each institutional staff association. The mission of UHESA is to “unify, train, educate, and cultivate higher education staff and their associations”. UHESA staff have organized a completion initiative titled, “Bring a Friend to Finish – Return, Learn, and Earn” (bff). This initiative will help facilitate the following strategic objectives of the *Utah State Board of Regents’ Strategic Plan 2025*:

- 1) **Affordable Participation** – Staff will reach out and invite friends and associates to return to school and offer to be a point of contact to answer questions or provide connections the returning adult student may need in order to access, prepare and succeed in higher education.
- 2) **Timely Completion** – Returning adults lack the “completion” part of their higher education. UHESA Staff will identify and make available the campus resources and support often needed to follow through to completion.

- 3) **Innovative Discovery** – Each institution will individually apply the basic idea of the “bff” initiative and employ the innovations of their staff members to customize the initiative to meet the needs of each respective institution, i.e., seminars, orientations, social media blasts, contests, etc.

Next Steps

UHESA invites everyone to participate in the “bff” initiative by visiting UHESA.org and completing the associated form. UHESA efforts will be ongoing in order to facilitate a commendable increase in degree completion.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

This is an information item only; no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to commend institutional staff associations and recognize their innovative efforts in pursuing the goals and objectives set forth in the new ten-year strategic plan.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/EJH