

January 11, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents
FROM: David L. Buhler
SUBJECT: Statewide Completion Report

Background

In 2013, the Board of Regents unanimously passed a resolution to “implement strategies to increase college completion rates.” The resolution supports the Board’s commitment to cost-effective higher education, resulting in meaningful credentials, to help students create a successful life and find gainful employment. The Board made five specific recommendations to institutional presidents, known as the Completion Initiatives and called on college and university presidents to report their progress to the Board each year. The initiatives were:

1. No later than the 2014-2015 school year, establish 15 credit hours per semester as the normal full-time course load for students to enable them to complete an associate degree in two years and a bachelor’s degree in four years.
2. Set plateau tuition levels with a focus on 12-15 credit hours to help students maximize tuition money and to encourage them to complete more credits per semester.
3. Create degree maps which specify courses for students to take each semester to stay on track to finish their degrees on time and to enable institutions to coordinate appropriate course scheduling.
4. Address math completion rates by
 - a. encouraging students to enroll in the appropriate mathematics course for their major in their first year of college (if they have not already completed general education math requirements in high school);
 - b. adopting an institutional strategy to transition underprepared students from developmental math to credit-bearing math courses within three semesters;
 - c. marketing math as a preferred concurrent enrollment option for high school seniors.
5. Explore the feasibility of implementing reverse transfer by transferring credits from a four-year university back to a transfer student’s previous two-year college. Create stackable credentials between career and technical education programs, associate degree tracks, and bachelor’s degrees to allow students to move more seamlessly through career preparation pathways.

In 2016, the Board of Regents approved a new strategic plan called "Utah: A State of Opportunity." That plan outlined specific targets for Affordable Participation, Timely Completion, and Innovative Discovery for the institutions within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE).

In support of the targets in the new 2016 strategic plan, the Commissioner is proposing more detailed strategies within the framework of the earlier 2013 Regents' Completion Initiatives. Those details are outlined below. The Commissioner is also recommending that the annual requirement to report progress on the Completion Initiatives be included in the statewide Strategic Plan Report provided to the Committee of the Whole.

Proposed Updates:

1. **Encourage On-time Completion**

Current status: All of the institutions have implemented a "Fifteen to Finish" Campaign to encourage full-time enrollment.

Next Steps: Institutions will also communicate that students can graduate on time if they take "Thirty [Credits] in Three [Semesters]." The Thirty in Three Campaign, which many institutions have already embraced, will help part-time students stay on track to complete an associate degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years.

2. **Plateau Tuition**

Current status: Plateau tuition has been implemented at all USHE institutions but one.

3. **Degree Maps**

Current status: Degree maps have been created for 98% of the majors at all USHE institutions.

Next Steps:

- a. The Critical Course Completion Project aims to ensure transferability of major pathways between institutions, to create degree maps for part-time students in order to help them stay on track for graduation, and to create structured scheduling to ensure students have access to the courses they need when they need them.
- b. Institutions have begun exploring Guided Pathway Systems to assist students with registration, eliminate graduation delays through more effective course scheduling, and utilize predictive analytics to support students at critical points in their degree progress.

4. **Appropriate First Year Math**

Current status: All institutions have been encouraging students to enroll in an appropriate first year math course and have been reporting on their progress.

Next steps:

- a. Continuation of the Math Pathways Redesign Project, which has been instituted for concurrent enrollment students. The Math Pathways Redesign encourages students to enroll in the math class best suited to their broad career pathway—Math 1030 (Quantitative Reasoning), Math/Stats 1040 or 1045 (Statistics), or Math 1050 (College Algebra/Pre-calculus).
- b. During the next phase of the redesign, departments will be re-examining the Quantitative Literacy requirement (1030, 1040/1045, or 1050) best suited for their programs and majors and will be coordinating those recommendations with campus advising programs.

- c. System-wide conversations will coordinate the creation of meta-majors (broad career pathways) and appropriate math recommendations within those meta-majors.
- d. Institutions will design stronger developmental math pathways, including co-requisite education and supplemental instruction.
- e. Legislative funding (SB196 2015) will be used to train more instructors for concurrent enrollment Math 1030 and Math 1040 courses, to encourage students to complete their Quantitative Literacy requirements while still in high school when possible.

5. Stackable Credentials/Reverse transfer

Current status: All institutions have some form of stackable credentials and transfer agreements with other institutions.

Next steps: Coordinate these efforts system-wide.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends that future statewide progress on these initiatives be reported to the full Board as part of the annual strategic plan report rather than in committee. The provost of each host institution will still give an institutional completion report to the Academic and Student Affairs committee.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JH