

September 6, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents  
FROM: David L. Buhler  
SUBJECT: Step Up Utah Scholars Training

Background

The Utah Scholars Initiative (USI) was launched in the 2006-2007 school year with a \$300,000 grant from the United States Department of Education and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Monies provided to the Utah System of Higher Education from the U. S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant made the USI program sustainable from 2008-2014. Since 2014, USI operations have been funded by the Utah State Legislature through the Education Excellence/College Readiness funding provided to the Outreach and Access programs of the Commissioner's Office.

Since its inception, the Utah Scholars Initiative has been a business and education partnership that sends volunteers from community organizations or local businesses into eighth grade classrooms to encourage students to prepare for their future. Initially, the Utah Scholars Initiative outlined an academically rigorous college preparatory curriculum for students to take through all four years of high school. In 2008 the Regents' Scholarship adopted the Utah Scholars Curriculum as the course criteria for the Regents' Scholarship. In the 2015-2016 school year USI expanded beyond just emphasizing a strong college preparatory curriculum in high school. Now called the "Step Up Utah Scholars Initiative," the new program includes a grade-by-grade (grades 9-12) checklist with items students can complete that will help them prepare for college. If students complete 20 items on the checklist and maintain a 3.0 grade point average, they can earn a Step Up Utah Scholars medallion to wear during their high school graduation. These checklist items include visiting a college campus, applying for scholarships, taking Advanced Placement and Concurrent Enrollment classes, and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Issue

The Step Up Utah Scholars Initiative relies on volunteers to give 45-minute presentations to eighth grade students across the state. This eighth grade outreach shows students the steps they can take in high school to graduate ready for college. The presentation discusses why college is important, how to prepare and pay for it, and how to participate in the Step Up Utah Scholars program to earn a graduation medallion. Through these presentations students learn that college is achievable for everyone.

During the September 2017 State Board of Regents meeting, the Academic and Student Affairs Committee will participate in a short version of the training received by Step Up Utah Scholars Volunteers to help prepare them for classroom presentations. This will help Regents have a first-hand feel for the program.

Commissioner's Recommendation

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

---

David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JH/EN