UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION
Building a Stronger State of Minds

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Affordable Participation and Timely Completion Grants

Background

The Utah State Legislature provides ongoing Education Excellence/College Readiness funding to the Outreach, Access, and Completion unit of the Commissioner's Office each year. Some of that funding can be used as "pass-through" money for initiatives at the various institutions within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE). In 2016, some funds were designated for Affordable Participation and Timely Completion Grants. Each institution was eligible for up to $75,000 for the creation of new initiatives to address the Regents' strategic goals as outlined in *Utah: A State of Opportunity.* Institutions with multiple campuses were eligible to apply for a separate grant for their regional campuses. In order to ensure that the grant money met institutional priorities as well as the Regents' strategic goals, the Commissioner's Office asked the institutional Chief Academic Officers to select one initiative or a cluster of initiatives from their institution to apply for the funding.

Issue

During the 2016-2017 school year, the USHE institutions began implementing the initiatives for which they received grant funding. The funding was meant to spur ongoing, sustainable projects, and many institutions received permission to spread their funding over two years if that best met program needs. Attached is a summary of the initiatives implemented by the institutions. The projects include efforts designed to increase student access to higher education, like outreach programs to underrepresented and first generation students in high school and summer bridge programs to remediate students who are academically underprepared for college-level work. Several institutions designed retention programs, some aimed at specific groups of students like non-traditional students or students from underrepresented backgrounds. Some tried to improve course scheduling and registration programs and to use predictive analytics to provide supports for students at risk of dropping out. Others designed targeted scholarships, tutoring programs, and student success courses to provide students with very specific help.

Next Steps

The institutions will be using the information gleaned from their grant projects to make improvements to existing programs and to scale up initiatives they piloted in 2016-2017. Several of the projects had findings that will be helpful statewide, so the Office of the Commissioner will provide Affordable Participation/Timely Completion grant money this year specifically to provide support to statewide workgroups. Those workgroups will share findings from the grant projects, identify best practices, and will receive funding to

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH   UtahStateUniversity   WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY   SUU SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY   SNOW COLLEGE   DSU DIXIE STATE UNIVERSITY   UVU UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY   Salt Lake Community College

scale up the initiatives between institutions. These include statewide forums on Academic Scheduling, Open Educational Resources, Predictive Analytics, Meta-majors, Advising, High Impact Practices, Competency-Based Education, and Access Programs for non-traditional, first generation, and underrepresented students.

<u>Commissioner's Recommendation</u>

<u>This is an information item only; no action is required.</u>

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David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JH

Affordable Participation/Timely Completion Grant Projects 2016-2017

Salt Lake Community College Aligning Class Schedules with Student Completion Goals. SLCC's grant money went to: 1) Institutional research on part-time student enrollment to identify scheduling obstacles to completion; 2) enlisting a business process consultant from the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers to conduct a review of scheduling practices and policies at SLCC; 3) having Ad Astra Information Systems perform an in-depth analysis of prior class schedules to identify inefficiencies, provide data dashboards, and make recommendations for improvements; 4) using Ellucian Banner consultants to conduct an on-site review of catalog and scheduling practices and to provide staff training on software, tools, and modules that can improve scheduling and registration; 5) creating a team of SLCC faculty and administrators to study best practices at other community colleges in Florida, Tennessee, and Arizona; 6) organizing a series of discussion forums with SLCC students, faculty, and staff to identify obstacles to completion; and, 7) surveying students about obstacles to completion. As a result of this research, SLCC has identified nine recommendations for improving academic scheduling and ten recommendations for improving registration. They have designed a two-year plan to implement the changes.

Weber State University Wildcat Scholars. The Wildcat Scholars program was designed to improve persistence of underrepresented and underprepared students at Weber State. It included: 1) meetings with students and an academic advisor; 2) utilizing ALEKS computer programs and tutoring for math remediation; 3) students participating in a freshman success course; 4) students participating in high impact practices; 5) scholarship supports and on-campus employment for low income students in the program; 6) students engaging in peer-to-peer tutoring within the community; 7) a Faculty Fellows program aimed to help faculty create inclusive classroom environments; and, 8) creation of a summer bridge program to help transition high school students to college.

Snow College 30 to Finish. The aim of Snow College's 30 to Finish campaign was to increase the number of students completing 30 credits per year by improving summer course offerings and attendance. The pilot program included: 1) increasing summer online course offerings by proving grants to faculty to help them convert face-to-face courses to online format; 2) reducing the cost of attendance in summer through a) grants for faculty to create free Open Educational Resources for their courses to replace costly textbooks and b) creation of a summer stipend for students; and, 3) targeting incoming first-year students to get a jump start on their degree by taking summer Math and English classes.

Dixie State Adelante! Washington County. Dixie State wanted to address the 20% disparity between Utah Hispanic students and the state average college participation rate. Their grant project included: 1) creation of a Latinos in Action program in Washington County; 2) a Dixie State, K-12, and DXATC partnership aimed at Latino/a students; 3) creation of a Spanish language *DSU Parent Guide*; 4) direct contact with 600 Latino high school students; 5) hosting a Latino Family Day at DSU; 6) creation of a Latino Community Specialist position and Adelante Internships; 7) a leadership conference for Snow Canyon High School Latinos in Action students; and, 8) creation of the Adelante Summer Bridge Program to transition students from high school to college.

University of Utah Sophomore Year Experience. The University of Utah funding was provided for one large, university-wide Sophomore Year Experience project and three smaller projects. The goal of the Sophomore Year Experience was to improve retention rates from the Sophomore to the Junior Year by: 1) using the software Civitas's predictive analytics capabilities to identify characteristics of students likely to

persist/likely to stop out and refining student support services accordingly; 2) creating a Learning Framework to help students develop a sense of purpose from their university experience for use in a one-credit course or non-credit workshops to support student persistence, engagement and completion; 3) expanding co-curricular supports for sophomores, including addressing key advising milestones and special advising for students with undeclared majors. Some money also went to projects outside the Sophomore Year Experience, including addressing Affordable Participation by hosting FAFSA awareness nights and targeting two types of High Impact Practices: service learning opportunities through the Bennion Center, and internships within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Utah State University (USU) Targeted First-Year Programs. Utah State University used its grant funds to conduct institutional research on the effectiveness of its existing student orientation (SOAR) and its first-year programs. That research, conducted by faculty, has resulted in publication and recommendations for improvements to the programs. The grant also funded pilots of a first-year mentoring program for first generation students and creating cohorts of students through monthly social activities and sponsored study sessions.

Utah State University Regional Campus Advising. USU also took advantage of the opportunity to apply for a second grant for its regional campus system. This grant was meant to improve advising at the campuses outside of Logan through: 1) institutional research to identify course taking patterns and to correct barriers to completing degrees at regional campuses; 2) improvements to regional advising based on research results, creation of an Appreciative Advisor training and certificate program, and the design of the new Meta-majors Advising Tool; and, 4) personal outreach to students who "stopped out" by creating completion and retention scholarships to bring them back.

Southern Utah University Advocacy Team. Southern Utah University wanted to increase access, participation, and success of non-traditional students and students from underrepresented backgrounds. Grant money was used for: 1) the creation of a peer advocacy program to help connect students with disability testing assistance, career and math placement testing, etc.; 2) supporting a Veterans Tutoring Veterans program; 3) creation of a study space for non-traditional students; 4) providing daycare during midterms, finals weeks, and other special events and organizing weekly support groups for students who are parents; 5) teaching about study skills and student success through workshops and a customized UNIV 1050 class; and 6) designating financial aid specialists for non-traditional students.

Utah Valley University Completion Grants. UVU wanted to address students who had attended UVU but had dropped out before completing a bachelor's degree. Project coordinators used National Student Clearinghouse Data to identify students who had completed degrees elsewhere. For those who had not yet earned a bachelor's degree, UVU identified their quickest routes to graduation. Special Retention Mentors then invited the former students to re-enroll and provided streamlined readmissions support. Some students were also offered special completion scholarships. An estimated 15-20% of the former students targeted responded, 200 re-enrolled, and 56 earned a degree.