

November 8, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents
FROM: David L. Buhler
SUBJECT: High Impact Practices Goal, Assessment, and Reporting

Background

National research indicates that students' exposure to certain "high impact practices" (sometimes called "engaged" or "experiential learning") can be very beneficial for increasing student engagement, retention, completion, and their transition into future careers. Some research indicates the payoff may be even greater for students from historically underrepresented groups. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), for example, notes that certain high-impact teaching and learning practices "have been widely tested" and have been "shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds, especially historically underserved students." However, nationwide, those underrepresented students have not always had "equitable access to high-impact learning."

Quality teaching is a top priority at Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) institutions and they have been implementing high impact teaching practices for years. The State Board of Regents recognizes the institutions' commitment to quality instruction and has consequently recognized High Impact Practices (HIPs) as an "Innovative Discovery" initiative in the state's Strategic Plan. They asked the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to ascertain the current state of implementation for high impact practices at the institutions and to determine a strategy for assessing the extent to which students are able to access and take advantage of the programs offered at their campuses. At the September board meeting, the Office of the Commissioner presented a table showing the current types of high impact practice courses being offered on each USHE campus. Those HIPs reflect the practices identified as most effective by several national organizations including the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), the National Association of System Heads (NASH), and the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), among others. Those joint lists include the following¹:

- First-Year Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research

¹ This list comes from George Kuh's 2008 *High-Impact Education Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*; the first ten practices are defined in this treatise. The eleventh practice listed here, ePortfolio, was only recently included in this list of HIPs, as documented by AAC&U in 2016.

- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- ePortfolios
- Educationally purposeful activities that include reflection and metacognition
- Evidence of sustained effort over an extended period of time, culminating in a major accomplishment or product, such as a report from a research project or applied learning experience (e.g. community engagement, internship, field work);
- Vetted demonstration of one or more desired outcomes such as persistence, increased engagement, interpersonal competence, or writing proficiency.

Issue

Since the September Board Report indicated that many practices identified as having high impact for students were being offered on USHE campuses, the next step is to ensure that all students have access to them at critical points in their educational career. Part of the charge given to the Commissioner's office included identifying a reasonable goal for students' access to high impact practices. Research by the National Association of System Heads has found exposure to at least two HIPs during the course of a bachelor's degree to be most helpful to students. The study of USHE campus offerings indicates that this is a reasonable goal, but one which will require systematic identification of courses or activities designated as HIPs and monitoring of students access to them.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner of Higher Education recommends that the Board establish the goal that all students participate in two high impact practices during study at the undergraduate level: (1) one during their first 30 credits of enrollment (not including concurrent enrollment), and (2) one within their major, and that reports on progress toward these goals occur during institutional completion reports at Board meetings.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/EJH/JM/JH