

May 9, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents
FROM: David L. Buhler
SUBJECT: 2018 Strategic Initiatives

The Board of Regents met on April 12-13, 2018 in a Study Session to discuss potential system initiatives proposed by the Regent Work Groups established at the November 2017 Board Meeting. The Board identified six potential initiatives in addition to the current efforts on Mental Health (adopted September 2017) and strategic communications.

In late 2017, the Board established three Work Groups made up of Regents, institutional subject matter experts and legislators focusing on the Board's three strategic objectives established in 2015: *Affordable Participation, Timely Completion, and Research & Workforce*. The Work Groups were charged with identifying and advising on specific initiatives that can most influence Utah's college attainment rate.

As part of the Board's efforts in these groups, the Board reaffirmed its major strategic focus identified in the 2025 Strategic Plan:

***Increase the educational attainment of Utahns
to enhance their overall quality of life,
and to meet Utah's current and future workforce needs.***

The Board also identified one additional strategic objective: *Capacity and Growth* to understand and better measure the operational and business efforts of USHE institutions in support of the Board's major strategic issue. The Board's clarification of its strategic priorities better align to the combined efforts of the Commissioner, Institutions and the Legislature in support of public higher education in Utah.

In April 2018, the Regent Work Groups, with assistance from Commissioner's staff, identified several potential or pending initiatives in support of its strategic objectives. The Board also reviewed plans for a statewide strategic communications plan, as well as current efforts to streamline and focus the Board's current outreach programs to the most impacting areas of the state. Additionally, in September 2017 the Board adopted a statewide strategy to begin addressing mental health issues among college students.

As a result of the April 2018 meeting, the following initiatives outline the efforts and recommendations of the Board and Commissioner's Office of the last several months. Associated project plans with timelines, milestones, and metrics for the upcoming 12 months are being developed by the Commissioner's staff with the oversight of the Board. Not all initiatives will immediately have detailed project plans, however work will continue on all projects to varying degree. Their implementations will be prioritized based on Regent discretion as well as the pragmatic realities of available resources, statutory requirements, timing with the

academic year, engagement of institutions and other external stakeholders, and overall potential impact in advancing the Board's Strategic Objectives for higher education in Utah:

Immediate Priority Initiatives

1. Automatic Acceptance Notifications
2. Student Aid and Tuition Policy Review and Evaluation
3. StepUp Schools

Longer-term Initiatives

- Stackable Bachelor's Degree
- Statewide Data Strategy (including transfer and predictive analytics)

Ongoing Projects (currently implementing)

- Strategic Communications Plan/2019 - 50th Anniversary of the Board of Regents
- Improve Information to Students on Workforce Options (UtahFutures)
- Mental Health Recommendations

Attached is a brief description of each initiative. Additional details including objectives, metrics, milestones and timelines for the Immediate Priority Initiatives will be provided to the Board in its combined meeting with Trustees in July 2018.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Board review and formally approve the initiatives, with instruction that additional details be developed by Commissioner's staff, in coordination with institutions and the Regent Working Groups. Additional details of the Immediate Priority Initiatives will be presented to the Board for information at the July Board Meeting, along with regular updates on all initiatives going forward.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/SJ

Board of Regents' Strategic Initiatives 2018

The Board of Regents adopted a ten-year strategic plan in 2016, and provided an update to its efforts in 2017. In 2018, with renewed focus by state leaders on the role of the Board and its leadership of the state's higher education system, the Board is refocusing on its primary mission to "provide strategic leadership and link system capacity to the economy and workforce needs," according to the duties defined in 53B-1-103-3 of the Utah Code. With that focus, the Board reaffirms its strategic goal:

Increase the educational attainment of Utahns to enhance their overall quality of life, and to meet Utah's current and future workforce needs.

The Board of Regents adopted the following strategic objectives in support of this strategic goal:

Affordable Participation | Timely Completion | Research & Workforce | Capacity & Growth

In late 2017, the Board established three work groups made up of Regents, institutional subject matter experts and legislators with a charge to identify and endorse specific initiatives that would most influence Utah's college attainment rate. The following initiatives outline the work groups' efforts and recommended strategic focus for the Board and Commissioner's Office. Associated project plans with timelines, milestones, and metrics for the upcoming 12 months are being developed by the Commissioner's staff with the oversight of the Board.

Additional details for the Immediate Priority Initiatives will be presented to the Board in its combined meeting with Trustees in July 2018, along with regular updates on all initiatives and projects below.

Immediate Priority Initiatives:

1. **Automated Acceptance Notifications (Access & Affordability)**

A basic step in helping set proper college-going expectations among high school students is affirming the opportunities for all high school graduates to attend Utah's colleges and universities. At a time when a large majority of jobs being filled requires a college education, a notification to all high school seniors and their parents reminding them of the affordable and accessible college opportunities in Utah is one obvious step in reinforcing a college-seeking culture, and improving the college-going rate of high school seniors. In Utah, the participation of high school graduates in higher education the year after graduation has hovered around 65%. Expanding the pipeline of incoming students is a foundational step to increasing college attainment rates in Utah by reaching out to high school seniors.

The Commissioner's Office will work with USBE and the USHE institutions to establish an automated system to identify and notify graduating high school students that they qualify and are eligible to attend college in Utah. This system would result in the generation of a comprehensive welcome letter for every high school senior and her/his parent, notifying them of their acceptance into any of the state's open access universities and colleges. Additionally, students who meet the admissions eligibility of the selective admissions schools will be notified of early acceptance. The letter will be sent to the graduating class of 2020. States like Idaho with similar initiatives have seen a 7% increase in overall enrollment.

2. **Student Aid and Tuition Policy Review and Evaluation** (Access & Affordability, Timely Completion)

The Board recognizes that a college education is more important than ever and that the return on investment for both the student and the state over the long-term will ultimately outweigh the initial investment made. However, that does not mean that paying for college is easy for students and their families, and many students believe higher education is not affordable to them.

The cost of college for an individual is largely a function of tuition costs and student financial aid, but also is impacted by student fees, housing, transportation, and other personal costs that students incur during their post-secondary experience. The Board has asked for the staff to develop a comprehensive initiative that will result in an evaluation and possible redesign of existing tuition policy and student aid policies (including tuition waivers) for both resident and nonresident students.

The Board has requested that institutions be more strategic in their use of tuition waivers, specifically to apply certain waivers to better support students facing significant financial barriers to enrollment. The Board will consider changes to its policies on tuition waivers at its May 2018 meeting for implementation during the upcoming academic year.

3. **StepUp Schools Initiative** (Access & Affordability)

The StepUp Schools Initiative leverages USHE's current outreach efforts (StepUp to Higher Education, Regents' Scholarship, Concurrent Enrollment, StepUp Utah Scholars, Utah College Application Week, FAFSA Nights, etc.) in a more comprehensive, streamlined, and focused outreach to targeted partner schools where a measurable impact can be made with better-defined outcomes. The Commissioner's Office has identified seventeen partner high schools (and 22 of their associated "feeder" junior high schools) as part of the StepUp Schools Initiative based on data such as students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, race/ethnicity indicators, FAFSA completion rates, and college enrollment rates.

The OCHE/UHEAA outreach teams will partner with identified schools to offer tailored, comprehensive outreach programming in these areas, including professional development for counselors and staff, on-the-ground support for implementing college-readiness activities, and a college-readiness grant. In addition to existing programming mentioned above, this initiative will work with counselors to use data to identify students and actively recruit them to apply for the Regents' Scholarship and participate in Concurrent Enrollment. A peer and near-peer mentor program, StepUp Ambassadors, will be placed in select partner schools to assist in staffing these efforts and helping counselors reinforce a college-going culture in their school. The Commissioner's Office is currently scheduling initial contact meetings with high school and junior high school principals in preparation for implementation during the 2018-19 academic year.

Longer-term Initiatives:

• **Stackable Bachelor's degree** (Timely Completion, Research & Workforce)

The Commissioner's Office will work to implement policy and funding levers that encourage institutions to increase opportunities for students to complete baccalaureate degrees in key occupational areas and, as appropriate, provide flexible requirements in the first two years, thus increasing stackability of credentials throughout the state.

A key part of this effort will be to define a new type of baccalaureate degree that can be awarded by USHE institutions, similar to what has been done in other states. The proposed new degree differs from a Bachelor of Science (BS) and Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree because it centers on flexible preparation in the first two years and strong foundations of applied knowledge within the discipline. New and revised baccalaureate programs created using the degree will rely heavily on partnerships with K-12, UTech colleges, and industry that link students to the program and to the discipline, and provide for use of certificate and/or associate degree programs from institutions throughout the state in completing degree requirements.

Revisions to Policy R401 are necessary to give institutions guidance in developing and revising baccalaureate programs that utilize the degree's characteristics and align to funding sources provided through initiatives such as Talent Ready Utah Grant Requests, Strategic Workforce Investments and Talent Development and Retention. Once in place, institutions can leverage policy and funding direction to build statewide stackable credential programs through the baccalaureate level in key occupational areas, in concert with state and regional economic development priorities.

- **Statewide Data Strategy (Timely Completion, Capacity & Growth)**

For the past several years, USHE institutions have pursued newfound data solutions to enhance student learning, help students identify degree pathways and stay on-track to graduation, reduce time and cost to completion, and to drive efficiencies in the face of continued student enrollment growth. However, institutions face significant barriers in implementing effective data solutions due to factors often outside their direct influence, including: a high transfer rate of Utah students (two-thirds of Utah college students attend two or more institutions); a diversifying student population; the inability to track students across the system; the lack of a common language, definitions, and metrics that could make inter- and intra-agency analyses of student pathways stronger; and sometimes a lack of local technological expertise to customize data products to meet institutional needs as well as the need to provide critical pathways to the state's workforce. A strategic agenda set on data is foundational to make any significant system-wide strides in increasing the state's attainment rates. A statewide data strategy would include:

- Coordinated licensing and implementation of enterprise data solutions for cost and data quality.
- Improved articulation and transfer of students among USHE and UTech institutions that enables the flexible, innovative and competency-based delivery methods that better supports today's variety of students.
- Dashboards and metrics with solid baseline data.
- Data quality that provides transparency and intra-system compatibility.
- IT infrastructure with the requisite security and usability.
- Predictive analytics to allow institutions to maximize efforts of their advisors, faculty, and other staff to provide early interventions to keep students on-track to graduation.

Ongoing Projects:

- **Strategic Communications Plan/50th anniversary (Access & Affordability, Research & Workforce)**

To increase momentum for the state-level strategic direction of higher education, USHE will engage with a communications agency and develop a robust communications strategy that will heighten the engagement of stakeholders, promote the importance of achieving a higher education and being

prepared for college, speak to the value-add of state-level higher education leadership, and promote the initiatives and projects the Board will be implementing in the coming months.

Different from institutional marketing and recruitment efforts, the Board of Regents operates at a state level and advocates for the importance of higher education in general. This campaign strategy will be structured with an overarching advocacy message for higher education in Utah with supporting, actionable initiatives propping up that message. This structure sets up a clear, proactive, and compelling narrative for the Board's vision for higher education in Utah. This will also be the springboard communications effort as the Board enters its 50th year in 2019.

- **LaunchMyCareer Exploration Tool on UtahFutures (Research & Workforce)**

The Commissioner's Office will work with the K-12, Talent Ready Utah and UtahFutures to implement a workforce exploration tool based on state data on postsecondary completers and their employment patterns. This tool is easily accessible via a web interface and allows users to explore and compare potential educational and career opportunities. The tool will inform high school students of the return on investment (ROI) and the projected breakeven cost of specific programs based on aggregated state graduate and wage data.

The use of UtahFutures has increased significantly since the Utah Education and Telehealth Network (UETN) has assumed supervision: registered accounts have tripled in two years, and users are spending more time on the site. As envisioned at its inception, it is becoming the backbone of student and parent college-planning efforts. Currently UtahFutures uses a tool based on national census data that is less current and reliable than the Utah-specific data that Launch My Careers will provide.

- **Mental Health Recommendations (Timely Completion)**

In September 2017, the Board of Regents approved the following recommendations of the Regents' Mental Health Working Group, directing institutions to:

- (1) Assess the mental health and wellness needs of USHE students
- (2) Improve mental health education at USHE institutions
- (3) Increase access to mental health services
- (4) Develop institutional five-year mental health implementation plans

Each recommendation includes specific strategies to achieve the desired outcomes. Institutions will create five-year implementation plans based on the recommendations which will incorporate the strategies outlined.