

January 16, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: 2019 Session of the Utah State Legislature

The 2019 Session of the Utah State Legislature commences on Monday, January 28, and continues through Thursday, March 14. The Board of Regents "shall, for the Utah System of Higher Education... establish unified budget, finance, and capital funding priorities" (Utah Code § 53B-1-103(3)(g)). The Commissioner's Office and Institutional leaders devote significant time and resources in advocating higher education interests to the Legislature throughout the 45-day session.

The major policy and budget issues the 2019 Legislative Session pertaining to public higher education at this juncture are:

- Statewide college advising
- Transfer and credit for prior learning
- State financial aid
- Capital facilities funding and planning

Of course, issues rapidly evolve and change during the session, further emphasizing the importance of the Board's engagement during the session.

According to the consensus revenue estimates prepared by the Governor's Office of Management and Budget and Office of Legislative Fiscal Analyst, the combined General Fund and Education Fund changes from last year show an increase of \$646 million in one-time funds and \$675 million in new ongoing funds.

Although there are significant new revenues, many competing priorities surface during the legislative session. The Commissioner's Office is working closely with the Regents' Strategic Communications Committee, Institution Presidents and their staffs, and student leaders to ensure consistent and concerted messaging and strategy during the 2019 legislative session.

Legislative Communications

The Board adopted Policy R-250 to provide guidance on legislative communications and expenditures associated with those legislative communications. Only a president, senior vice-president (or equivalent), or legislative liaison may engage in legislative communications, with limits of two designated legislative liaisons during a legislative session. A president may authorize other employees to engage in legislative communications for limited, subject-specific purposes. Institutions may also represent the Board of Regents by taking official positions on legislative action, as long as it is not contrary to the Board's position.

Regents' Strategic Communications Committee

The Regents' Strategic Communication Committee is responsible for developing the advocacy messaging and strategies of the Board's legislative priorities. The Committee will hold a weekly conference call with the Commissioner and staff to review emerging and evolving legislative issues, and strategize actions that most effectively represents the Board's positions to the Legislature. The Committee will advise the Executive Committee, as needed, of possible formal actions required of the Board during the Legislative Session.

Commissioner's Recommendation

1. Reaffirm the Board's budget and capital facilities priorities of the Utah System of Higher Education for the 2019 Session of the Utah State Legislature, as adopted by the Board on September 20, 2018, along with any subsequent modifications to date.
2. Regents, Commissioner and staff, Presidents and institutional representatives work unitedly in support of the Board's unified budget and capital development priorities in their advocacy with the Legislature.
3. Authorize the Commissioner, in consultation with the Regents' Strategic Communications Committee and the Board Chair to act on behalf of the Board regarding legislation that may be introduced during the 2019 Legislative Session.
4. Request the Commissioner's Office provide the Board, via the Regents' Strategic Communications Committee, with regular reports during the legislative session regarding items of interest to the Utah System of Higher Education.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/SJ