



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TAB I

March 25, 2022

Resolution to Affirm and Support USHE's LGBTQ+ Community

On February 18, 2022, the Student Affairs Committee took action to forward the *Resolution to Affirm and Support USHE's LGBTQ+ Community* to the full Board for consideration.

From a [2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth](#), “75% of LGBTQ youth reported that they had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime.” This lived experience contributes to feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and stress, impacting a student’s well-being and ability to persist and succeed in higher education. In adopting this resolution, the Board commits to working in partnership with USHE’s institutions to encourage and sustain spaces of inclusion, belonging, and thriving.

The LGBTQ+ resolution is in line with Board efforts [to advance equitable systemic change](#) and the [Equity Lens Framework](#), which commits USHE and its 16 institutions to “setting the groundwork for clear accountability, allowing all efforts to be focused on closing opportunity gaps for marginalized populations.”

The LGBTQ+ resolution commits to working in partnership with the 16 institutions to create benchmarks of best practice and guidelines to better support LGBTQ+ student success while celebrating the vast current and past efforts and initiatives of USHE institutions in support of the LGBTQ+ community.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Utah Board of Higher Education approve the *Resolution to Affirm and Support USHE's LGBTQ+ Community*, and direct his office to report back to the Student Affairs Committee on progress in meeting the next steps outlined in the resolution on a regular basis.

Attachment

Resolution to Affirm and Support USHE's LGBTQ+ Community

Whereas, the Utah Board of Higher Education and all 16 Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) institutions welcome, affirm, and actively seek to support current and prospective students, faculty, and staff of all gender identities, sexual orientations, and expressions of identity and/or orientation; and

Whereas, the Board celebrates all efforts, past and present, undertaken by each of the individual 16 USHE institutions to support LGBTQ+ students, including creating resource centers, collaborating with community groups, providing mental health support, supporting student-run LGBTQ+ clubs and organizations, creating inclusive restrooms, improving correct/preferred/chosen name and pronoun processes, collecting data, organizing a USHE LGBTQ+ Program Coordinator Coalition, and more; and

Whereas, the Board acknowledges the resilience and courage of LGBTQ+ youth and young adults as they often experience higher rates of stress, depression, anxiety, isolation, difficulty with schoolwork, and suicidal ideation due to experiences of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity¹; and

Whereas, the Board recognizes that, as an often underrepresented and underserved population, LGBTQ+ students in the state of Utah face many unique challenges impacting their success and quality of life within higher education, and the Board's responsibility to support systemic efforts to improve the LGBTQ+ student experience; and

Whereas, the Board recognizes the intersectional identities within the LGBTQ+ community, including Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC), undocumented LGBTQ+ "UndocuQueer" individuals, LGBTQ+ veterans and active military individuals, disabled LGBTQ+ individuals, and countless others. The Board commits to better understanding and addressing gaps that exist in meeting the needs of each of these students; and

Whereas, the Utah Board of Higher Education acknowledges the need to stay informed and aware of the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ students and understands the importance of increasing USHE's systemic ability to capture data and information related to this student population to inform decisions and interventions; and

Whereas, in 2020, the Utah Board of Higher Education adopted an Equity Lens Framework to guide the Board "in their implementation of strategies, initiatives, policymaking, and more", and the Board is committed to each part of the Framework as it relates to students of diverse and intersectional gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations; and

Whereas, institutional Senior Student Affairs Officers, student leaders, and others across USHE have expressed a desire for increased Board guidance, governance, and support as all 16 institutions continue to advocate, help, lift, and support Utah's LGBTQ+ student population;

¹ *Jed Foundation Proud and Thriving Report and Framework: Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ High School, College, and University Students*, p. 13 (available at <https://jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Proud-Thriving-Report-and-Framework-10.2021.pdf>; <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>)

Therefore, the Utah Board of Higher Education resolves to advance sustainable and systemic efforts within the Utah System of Higher Education by:

1. Developing USHE LGBTQ+ best practices to inform the System and institutions on how to best support and facilitate the success of LGBTQ+ students. The Commissioner's Office will develop the best practices in partnership with: the USHE LGBTQ+ Program Coordinator Coalition, which is dedicated to and involved in institutional efforts related to LGBTQ+ students; the Utah Student Association including technical college students; Institutional student-led LGBTQ+ clubs and organizations; the USHE Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council; local and state community groups; the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals; and others to ensure the USHE LGBTQ+ best practices are meaningful, impactful, and support Utah LGBTQ+ students' ability to succeed and experience higher quality of life during their time at a USHE institution. The USHE LGBTQ+ best practices will be developed by December 2022 and may include best practices and guidelines to address:
 - a. Institutional data collection on LGBTQ+ members of campus communities;
 - b. Considerations for increasing accessible gender-inclusive restroom facilities;
 - c. Faculty, staff, and administration training and advocacy programs/procedures;
 - d. LGBTQ+ inclusive policy development, implementation, and sustainability;
 - e. Name and gender marker update processes and policies, including correct/preferred/chosen name and pronouns, and ID cards;
 - f. Campus safety, mental health, and physical health & wellbeing specific to LGBTQ+ students; and
 - g. General best practices for supporting LGBTQ+ student success and sense of belonging.
2. Directing the Commissioner's Office to better understand current USHE institutional LGBTQ+ student data collection practices and, if necessary, work in collaboration with the 16 USHE institutions to develop guidelines in support of more inclusive and uniform data collection. The Commissioner's Office will also provide central support and guidance to USHE institutions for their data collection efforts.
3. Advocating for increased mental health support, services, and resources, including the staffing and physical space required to meet the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students experiencing disproportional rates of suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.²
4. Supporting and encouraging USHE institutions' efforts to become a "Premier Campus" under the Campus Pride Index³.
5. Pursuing collaborative relationships with other USHE institutions, local and state community groups, and advocacy organizations—such as, but not limited to, Encircle, Utah Pride Center, Equality Utah, and others—to explore meaningful partnerships, resource sharing, and long-term support plans to ensure student success prior to enrollment and success beyond completion.

Dated this 25 day of March 2022.

Harris H. Simmons, Chair
Utah Board of Higher Education



Dave R. Woolstenhulme
Commissioner of Higher Education

² The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021 (available at <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2021/>); Jed Foundation Proud and Thriving Report and Framework: Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ High School, College, and University Students, p. 13 (available at <https://jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Proud-Thriving-Report-and-Framework-10.2021.pdf>)

³ <https://campusprideindex.org/search/index>)