



ANNUAL REPORT

November 18, 2025

Higher Education Corrections Council

2025 Utah Higher Education and Corrections Council Annual Report

The Higher Education and Corrections Council (HECC) was established by [House Bill 226 \(2022\)](#) to advise the Utah Board of Higher Education, the Education Interim Committee, and the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the development and delivery of accredited higher education curriculum to incarcerated individuals in the state correctional system. The council's statutory charge is to coordinate, facilitate, and support education to prepare individuals for integration and productive employment upon release. HECC provides recommendations to the Utah Board of Higher Education and the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) for the delivery of higher education, data collection and analysis, and requests for legislative appropriations.

A roster of council members, appointed as set forth in Utah Code [53H-1-604\(3\)](#), is provided in [Appendix A](#). The council is co-chaired by Senator Michael K. McKell and Representative Melissa G. Ballard and is staffed by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. The council held three meetings in May, August, and October of 2025. This council report of programs, plans, and recommendations for higher education in correctional facilities is provided in accordance with Utah Code [53H-1-604\(9\)](#).

In fiscal year 2025, 198 incarcerated adults earned postsecondary credentials (associate degrees and technical education certificates) through Davis Technical College, Salt Lake Community College, and Uintah Basin Technical College. Together, these institutions, along with Snow College and the University of Utah, provided credit-bearing higher education opportunities and support to 933 incarcerated adults statewide, reflecting Utah's growing commitment to expanding educational access within correctional facilities. As detailed in [Appendix B](#), enrollment and completion data provide an overview of participation and outcomes, underscoring Utah's ongoing commitment to education as a foundation for rehabilitation and reentry success. The Council also recognizes Utah Tech University, which provides education for youth in custody, and Ensign College, a private nonprofit institution that collaborates on strategies that best serve incarcerated learners, including credit-transfer alignment. These partnerships reflect Utah's shared vision and collective expertise in advancing rehabilitation and reintegration. The following section outlines the institutions and correctional facilities that participate in HECC and currently offer technical and academic programs across Utah's public higher education institutions:

Technical Education Certificate Programs:

(Contracted by UDC; funded by Prison Telephone Surcharge Account, student tuition, and UDC programming budget)

- Davis Technical College (at Utah State Correctional Facility, Salt Lake City, Utah)
- Snow College (at Central Utah Correctional Facility, Gunnison, Utah)
- Uintah Basin Technical College (at Duchesne County Jail, Duchesne, Utah)

Academic Education:

(Funded by institutional Education & General (E&G) budgets, student tuition, and external grants or donations)

- Salt Lake Community College (at Utah State Correctional Facility)
- Snow College (at Central Utah Correctional Facility, Gunnison, Utah)
- The University of Utah Prison Education Project offers credit-bearing courses through the University of Utah and in partnership with public and private postsecondary institutions, such as Weber State University and Brigham Young University (at Utah State Correctional Facility)

Higher Education and Corrections Council Plans and Programs

The following are highlights of work related to higher education and corrections during 2025:

- ***Council Membership***

In 2025, nine council members were reappointed or designated to the Higher Education and Corrections Council, including Representative Melissa Ballard as co-chair alongside Senator Mike McKell, while Governor Cox appointed a new former-student member to serve on the council. During this period, formerly incarcerated student Matthew Holman concluded his two-year term with heartfelt words of gratitude and encouragement to continue advancing educational access for incarcerated individuals. He left the council with a powerful reminder

“Education needs to be something that translates into success on the streets.”

and actionable challenge: *“Education needs to be something that translates into success on the streets—is this actually going to work, is this actually going to pay off?”*

- ***Davis Technical College***

Davis Technical College (Davis Tech) continues to deliver industry-driven training programs in high-demand fields such as welding, information technology, web design, business administration, and culinary arts. In May 2025, the college celebrated its largest graduating class to date with 138 students and, with a strong 75% retention rate, anticipates 175 graduates in the next fiscal year. Student feedback confirms the value of these programs, citing improved employment prospects, personal growth, better mental health, and positive behavior changes. Davis Tech affirms that its programs directly reduce recidivism. In

partnership with UDC, Davis Tech is also preparing to expand opportunities by offering approximately 16 courses to inmates housed in maximum-security areas, further broadening access to meaningful educational pathways that align with workforce needs.

- ***Salt Lake Community College***

SLCC is leading transformative efforts to expand higher education opportunities for incarcerated students in Utah. In May 2025, SLCC proudly celebrated the graduation of 29 students earning associate degrees, bringing the total to 77 graduates over the past three years. As a pioneer in restoring Pell Grant access within the prison system, SLCC has successfully piloted this initiative and is now transitioning into an official Second Chance Pell institution. Recognizing the importance of collaboration, SLCC has partnered with the University of Utah and Snow College and is strengthening ties with Davis Tech and Ensign College to ensure seamless credit transfers and greater academic pathways for incarcerated learners. Looking ahead, SLCC is committed to expanding its reach by delivering broadcast courses to inmates in county jails, furthering its mission to provide education as a powerful tool for rehabilitation and second chances.

- ***Snow College***

Snow College currently serves incarcerated students at the Central Utah Correctional Facility (CUCF) and offers both academic and vocational training. Enrollment has grown steadily—from 20 students in the first term, to 40 in fall 2024, and to 80 in fall 2025—and is projected to reach 120 by fall 2026. In total, 400 incarcerated individuals have already been cleared as eligible for postsecondary education, though space limitations remain the greatest barrier to expansion. Academically, Snow successfully transitioned from operating under SLCC's oversight to independently administering courses at CUCF, with its partnership with SLCC serving as a model of institutional collaboration.

On the technical side, Snow has implemented USHE-aligned programs, including a 6-credit Carpentry Fundamentals course and a 30-credit Construction Technology program. Through an equivalency evaluation, the college is awarding 31 certificates to students—12 in Construction Technology and 19 in Carpentry Fundamentals—based on coursework completed over the past two years. Looking forward, Snow is seeking a partnership with a four-year institution to create bachelor's degree pathways for incarcerated students. This partnership will actively engage with more than 30 justice-friendly employers to support job placement upon release and explore the use of Webex technology to deliver virtual classes to Sanpete, Juab, and Emery County jails.

- ***Uintah Basin Technical College***

UBTech operates a Construction Program at Duchesne County Jail, giving incarcerated individuals the opportunity to build valuable trade skills through hands-on training and

industry-recognized certifications. In FY25, the program served 40 students, with 31 successfully graduating. A major highlight was the completion of a full-scale house project constructed by students at the jail and relocated to its final site in Tabiona, demonstrating the program's emphasis on real-world application. Despite a leadership transition following the retirement of the previous instructor, UBTech ensured continuity in instructional quality and program delivery. Looking ahead, UBTech is seeking support to expand offerings with a Culinary Arts program—leveraging existing equipment and space for a cost-effective launch—and a Heavy Equipment Operator program that would use state-of-the-art simulation technology. Both initiatives would provide incarcerated students with practical, work-ready skills aligned with industry demand, supporting smoother reentry and reducing recidivism.

- ***University of Utah***

The Utah Prison Education Project (UPEP) bachelor's degree program maintains a 100% retention rate for its first cohort of degree-seeking students and is on track to graduate them in 2027. Complementing this effort, the University of Utah launched an integrated, cross-functional "One-Stop Shop Student Center" to provide peer tutoring and advising for incarcerated students in the women's unit at USCF. Through collaboration with Davis Tech, SLCC, and Sky View Academy, this initiative has already demonstrated significant impact, with incarcerated Education Advocates serving more than 200 learners—approximately 45% of the unit's population—in its first ten months of operation.

Further strengthening the landscape of prison education, Dr. Erin Castro (Associate Professor) was awarded an \$8 million grant to establish the nation's first Prison Education Action Research Lab, a center dedicated to advancing research, leadership, and praxis in higher education in prison.

- ***Utah Department of Corrections: Contracts and Funding***

The Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) continues to strengthen its impact on inmate education through expanded programming, institutional partnerships, and financial planning. UDC has successfully renewed contracts with higher education institutions, ensuring program continuity and stability. A key development on the funding front is the Federal Communications Commission's extension of the prison telephone surcharge through April 2027, which currently provides 82% of UDC's education funding (\$1.8 million). This extension gives UDC, institutions, and legislators additional time to identify sustainable long-term funding sources to maintain and expand higher education programs.

Additionally, in response to HB 224, UDC is evaluating financial literacy by collaborating with partner subject-matter experts to develop departmental standards tailored to offender needs, exploring restitution and savings incentives, and implementing literacy assessments in orientation. UDC has also been deeply engaged in the Higher Education and Corrections

Council, fostering collaboration, aligning strategies across institutions, and ensuring that higher education remains central to rehabilitation and reentry goals. These initiatives, supported by fidelity assessments and stronger cross-institution coordination, demonstrate UDC's commitment to rehabilitation, reentry success, and long-term program viability.

- **Legislation**

The Legislature passed [HB 224, *Inmate Reentry, Finances, and Debt Modification*](#), sponsored by Representative Melissa Ballard with Senator Mike McKell as floor sponsor. This bill expands reentry supports by requiring county jails and the Office of State Debt Collection to suspend interest on certain debts during and after incarceration, provides inmates with regular information on their debts plus resources on money management/financial literacy, and expands the duties of the reentry division at the Utah Department of Corrections.

Recommendations to the Board of Higher Education and Utah Department of Corrections

1. Sustainable funding

To ensure the long-term stability of correctional education in Utah, it is critical to establish a sustainable funding model beyond the temporary extension of the prison telephone surcharge ([FCC DA 25-565](#)). While the Federal Communications Commission's decision to extend this funding source until April 2027 provides important short-term relief—currently covering 82% of UDC's education budget—it is only a stopgap. UDC will convene with state leaders and partner institutions to design and secure a permanent, diversified funding strategy that protects and expands access to higher education programs for incarcerated learners. Without a reliable funding base, the progress achieved in recent years—including strong partnerships, rising enrollments, and program completions—risks being undermined just as momentum is building.

2. Growth Through Access – Reaching Jails Through a Virtual Platform

To expand access to postsecondary education, Utah should strengthen its virtual learning infrastructure and enable established institutions already serving incarcerated learners to extend their reach into county jails. This approach would streamline partnerships and more evenly distribute educational opportunities across the state. The state should implement a safe, secure, and scalable digital education system across all prisons and jails by fall 2026, supported by modern learning platforms similar to those used by students outside correctional facilities, along with sufficient secure devices and staff training to ensure consistent, reliable delivery. By prioritizing a coordinated virtual learning strategy, Utah can bridge existing access gaps, deliver high-quality accredited coursework, and ensure that incarcerated learners in county jails have the same opportunities as those in state facilities. Snow College, in partnership with SLCC, has already demonstrated success with this model

by reaching Sanpete, Juab, and Emery County jails, offering a strong example to replicate statewide.

3. *Measuring Success: Job Outcomes for Incarcerated Learners*

To strengthen alignment between correctional education and workforce outcomes, Utah should consider data-sharing options that would support job outcomes. Such an agreement would enable the integration of education, employment, and recidivism data, allowing the Utah Data Research Center to build dashboards that showcase job outcomes for incarcerated students who complete postsecondary programs. This type of analysis would provide legislators, higher education institutions, and UDC with actionable insights to make evidence-based decisions, ensure programs are aligned with labor market needs, and demonstrate the long-term return on investment of correctional education.

Closing Summary

The 2025 work of the Higher Education and Corrections Council demonstrates what is possible when Utah's correctional and higher education partners unite around a shared belief: that education transforms lives and strengthens communities. This year, 198 incarcerated adults earned degrees and certificates from Utah's public colleges and universities—more than double the number of graduates in each of the previous two years. This milestone reflects growing access, stronger partnerships, and the measurable power of education in supporting rehabilitation and reentry. These accomplishments affirm the direction of the Council's three key recommendations: securing sustainable funding beyond the temporary telephone surcharge, expanding access through virtual learning platforms that reach county jails statewide, and developing data-sharing systems that connect education to employment and recidivism outcomes.

Appendix A: Higher Education and Corrections Council

Eleven Council Members ([UCA 53H-1-604\(3\)](#))

Terms of office expire on June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027

1. *House of Representatives, Co-Chair* (appointed by Speaker):

Representative Melissa Ballard

2. *Senate, Co-Chair* (appointed by President):

Senator Michael McKell

3. *Commissioner of Higher Education or Designee:*

Richard Gonzalez (designee), Assistant Commissioner for Adult Learner Access

4. *Institution Employees (two)* engaged in prison education, with transfer articulation expertise (appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education):

Technical College:

Dan Powers, Davis Technical College, Director of Rehabilitative Programs

Degree-Granting Institution:

David Bokovoy, SLCC, Prison Education Director

5. *Governor appointments:*

Researcher who actively researches higher education delivered in a corrections setting using evidence-based practices:

Andy Eisen, Director of Prison Education, University of Utah

Former Student who participated in postsecondary educational programs while incarcerated:

Becky Golly, Davis Tech and SLCC Graduate

6. *Member of the Board of Pardons and Parole* (appointed by BPP Chair):

Dan Bokovoy (designee), Board of Pardons and Parole

7. *Utah Department of Corrections Executive Director or Designee:*

Rebecca “Becky” Brown (designee), Deputy Executive Director

8. *Utah Department of Corrections Employee* with education expertise (appointed by Executive Director):

Chief Randall “Jake” Honey, Chief of Reentry & Rehabilitation

9. *Department of Workforce Services Executive Director or Designee:*

Helen Hanson (designee), Economic Service Area Director, Northern Utah

Appendix B: Higher Education in Utah Correctional Facilities (Fiscal Year Ending on June 30, 2025)

Fiscal Year 2025	Davis	Snow	UBTech	SLCC	U of U	Total
Distinct Headcount	402	94	40	140	238*	914
Graduates	138	0	31	29	0	198
Total FY26 Budget	\$1,784,693	\$204,209	\$142,696	\$641,250	\$518,228	\$3,291,076

*Included are the 200 students served by the UPEP One-Stop Shop Student Center

Budget Detail	FY24	FY25	FY26
UDC Contracts	\$2,407,777	\$2,407,777	\$2,131,598
SLCC - Prison Ed. Approp.	\$339,000	\$339,000	\$341,765
SLCC - Institutional E&G	\$188,000	\$188,000	\$216,711
SLCC - Institutional Funds III	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$82,774
University of Utah	NA	NA	\$518,228
Total	\$3,024,777	\$3,024,777	\$3,291,076

Davis Technical College – Utah State Correctional Facility (Salt Lake)

FY25 & FY26 Program(s)	Fiscal Year 2025		Budget	FY26
	Distinct Headcount	Graduates		
Automation/Robotics (Female)	27	8	UDC Contract	\$1,784,693
Automotive Technology (Male)	51	18		
Business Administrative Services (Female)	40	16		
Business Administrative Services (Male)	56	22		
Culinary Arts (Female)	69	29		
Culinary Arts (Male)	3	3		
Information Technology (Female)	1	1		
Information Technology (Male)	30	9		
CNC Machining (Male)	32	13		
Web & Graphic Design (Female)	39	12		
Welding Technology (Male)	54	7		
FY25 Total	402	138		

Snow College – Central Utah Correctional Facility (Gunnison)

	Fiscal Year 2025	
FY25 & FY26 Program(s)	Distinct Headcount	Graduates
Construction Management (17 students enrolled each semester)	11	31
General Education (New FY25)	83	0
Undeclared Majors	0	0
FY25 Total	94	31

Budget	FY26
UDC Contract	\$204,209.00

Salt Lake Community College – Utah State Correctional Facility (Salt Lake)

	Fiscal Year 2025	
FY25 & FY26 Program(s)	Distinct Headcount	Graduates
General Studies	111	16
Anthropology	6	3
Business	15	7
Criminal Justice	3	2
Humanities and Other	5	1
FY25 Total	140	29

Budget	FY26
UDC Contract	\$0
Prison Ed E&G Approp.	\$341,765
Institutional E&G	\$216,711
Institutional Funds III	\$82,774
Total	\$641,250*

*SLCC's budget has remained the same since 2017; therefore, these are estimates pending the current evaluation, and including the cost of faculty (both adjunct and full-time)

Uintah Basin Technical College – Duchesne County Jail

	Fiscal Year 2025	
FY25 & FY26 Program(s)	Distinct Headcount	Graduates
Residential Construction	40	36

Budget	FY26
UDC Contract	\$142,696

University of Utah's Prison Education Project (UPEP) bachelor's degree program – Utah State Correctional Facility (Salt Lake) – Women's DELL building

	Fiscal Year 2025	
FY25 & FY26 Program(s)	Distinct Headcount	Graduates
Bachelors in University Studies (BUS)	13	0
Credit-bearing courses with Weber State University and Utah Humanities	25	
One-Stop Shop Student Center*	200	
FY25 Total	238	0**

Budget	FY26
UDC Contract	\$0
Institutional funds, Grants, and Donations	\$518,228

*The Center has served over 200 students with tutoring support services

** With a 100% retention rate, UPEP expects its first cohort graduation in 2027