UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Annual Report 2025-26



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16 Public Colleges and Universities

Serving 311,942 Students

Our Vision

Utah is an innovative global leader in providing world-class higher education and advancing research that enhances the quality of life in the state.

Our Mission

USHE operates cohesively across the state's 16 public colleges and universities to provide valuable education that meets workforce needs and enhances the wellbeing and prosperity of all Utahns.

Utah Board of Higher Education Members



Amanda Covington
Chair



Jon Cox
Vice Chair



Javier Chavez Jr.



Jeremy Hafen



Jodi Hart



Danny Ipson



Steve Neeleman



Aaron Skonnard



Cydni Tetro

Former Student Member
Garrett Largent



Tyler Shumway
Student Member



Geoffrey Landward
Commissioner

Chair's Message

In January 2026, the Board, Governor Cox, and legislative leaders signed a historic joint resolution reaffirming our shared commitment to student success and public accountability. Setting a national standard, this resolution ensures Utah's higher education remains affordable, accessible, and focused on preparing students for meaningful work and successful lives.

Building on this commitment, the Board continues to make significant progress on its 2024-27 Strategic Plan to strengthen the value of public higher education in Utah, for both students and the state as a whole.

Having completed Year One of our strategic reinvestment initiative (HB 265, 2025 General Legislative Session), the Board reports exceptional progress in optimizing institutional resources. Our institutions are progressing faster than expected and remain on track to implement Years Two and Three successfully.

This year, the Board approved Year Two institutional strategic reinvestment plans with minor modifications. These financial shifts better align our academic programs with Utah's economic priorities and reflect our responsibility to ensure public resources are used effectively and deliver lasting value.

Affordability remains another top priority. For the 2026-27 academic year, the Board approved a below-inflation 2.82% systemwide weighted average tuition increase for degree-granting institutions. Most technical college tuition will remain constant, with the exception of a few net-neutral increases and a general fee reduction for Snow College. We appreciate the thoughtful collaboration between our institutions, the Board, and the Commissioner's office to balance institutional needs with our commitment to affordability, access, and value for Utah students.

Strong institutional leadership is also important to the future of higher education in Utah. The Board has strengthened its approach to presidential searches, onboarding, evaluation, and professional development to support leaders and their institutions at every stage.

This year, the Board has supported presidential searches and transitions at two universities and three technical colleges. The process balances candidate confidentiality with transparency and gives institutional stakeholders opportunities to provide input, helping identify highly qualified leaders equipped to meet each institution's distinct needs and goals.

This year, we also welcomed a new Board member, student representative **Tyler Shumway**.

The progress detailed in this report is possible because of the exceptional dedication of the USHE's faculty, staff, institutional leaders, and Commissioner Landward's team. The Board is profoundly thankful for their student-centered work. As we look to the future, the Board is committed to driving progress in a system that leads to increased opportunity and better quality of life for Utahns and their communities.

Amanda Covington
Utah Board of Higher Education Chair

Commissioner's Message

In her message, Chair Covington remarked on the significant progress we've made over the past year. We're continually moving the system forward with a focus on driving student success, financial value, and economic development.

One of our most significant initiatives this year is the reimagining of Utah's higher education system to design a cohesive alliance of 16 institutions built on complementary but distinct missions, institutional specialization, shared resources, and advancement through partnership rather than competition. This structure will build academic partnerships across the system, integrate student services, share administrative services, and support thoughtful change management to ensure Utah's higher education community builds and advances this vision.

Ultimately, the system redesign will position institutions as force multipliers, delivering a whole greater than the sum of its parts. This will improve student outcomes, increase value for taxpayers, and propel Utah's economy.

Another important part of building a more connected system is program planning. Our office developed a Systemwide Program Plan to allow the Board and the Commissioner's office a more proactive role in program governance and help institutions identify opportunities for collaboration earlier in the program development process. This approach will help avoid duplication, build partnerships, and ensure every new program serves our students, Utah's economy, and its taxpayers.

USHE continues to prioritize a strong partnership with Utah's K-12 system. A significant milestone in this effort was the formal launch of Utah's First Credential Program in October. The program creates a framework through which every high school student can earn a meaningful, industry-aligned credential before graduation, strengthening the connection between education and workforce opportunity. The initiative has also sparked a major innovation within USHE: the development and first-ever offering of technical education programs through concurrent enrollment.

In July, the Board established a task force to review the Systemwide Program Plan and recommend new program collaboration and integration statewide. The task force's work is currently underway.

As we strengthen systemwide collaboration, we're also preparing our institutions and students for an evolving workforce. In December 2025, the Board passed a resolution establishing strategic direction for integrating artificial intelligence across Utah's public higher education institutions. The resolution aims to: equip students with AI-ready workforce skills, transform education and research responsibly, and reimagine higher education for an AI-accelerated economy.

To drive this vision, my office launched a statewide AI Task Force composed of leading experts and institutional partners. Our first action was to advance a university-issued AI Workforce Credential in partnership with Governor Cox's AI Pro-Human Committee, our institutions, Talent Ready Utah, and employers.

Another notable milestone in systemwide collaboration was the creation of the Utah Cooperation Cohort, a network for fostering collaboration and building relationships across differences in Utah. The initiative supports research, curriculum, internships, and service opportunities across the system. Interfaith America and the University of Utah jointly manage the program.

At the end of the 2025-26 academic year, the State Higher Education Executive Officer Association presented the Utah System of Higher Education with the "2026 Exceptional Agency Award" for shaping Utah's system to better serve

students, for outstanding governance, and for innovative initiatives to strengthen the state's future workforce.

While we are proud of our progress, our work is far from finished. We are focused on building a more connected and responsive system that delivers value for students, employers, and communities.

Geoffrey Landward
Utah Commissioner of Higher Education

New Initiatives

Campus Safety Task Force

In October 2026, the Utah Board of Higher Education approved more than 25 recommendations from the USHE Campus Safety Task Force to strengthen safety across Utah's public colleges and universities. The Board directed institutional presidents to implement the recommendations and report progress by July 2027.

The task force, established in October 2025, brought together representatives from USHE institutions and local, state, and private sector partners to build on existing safety efforts at campuses. The recommendations establish consistent policies and practices, shared resources, regional collaboration, and stronger coordination with emergency-response partners.
The task force drew on national best practices and evidence-based models to create practical tools and resources to put the recommendations into action. The recommendations address five areas:

- Behavioral Threat Intervention and Management
- Safety of Events, Facilities, and Operations
- Responding in Emergencies – Individuals in the Campus Community
- Responding in Emergencies – Professionals
- Post-Emergency Communications, Debriefing, and Continuous Improvement

These actions provide a framework for all USHE campuses to prepare for emergencies and improve response. They also support safe, open environments where students, faculty, and staff can focus on learning, teaching, and exchanging ideas.

Learn more about the findings and recommendations online.



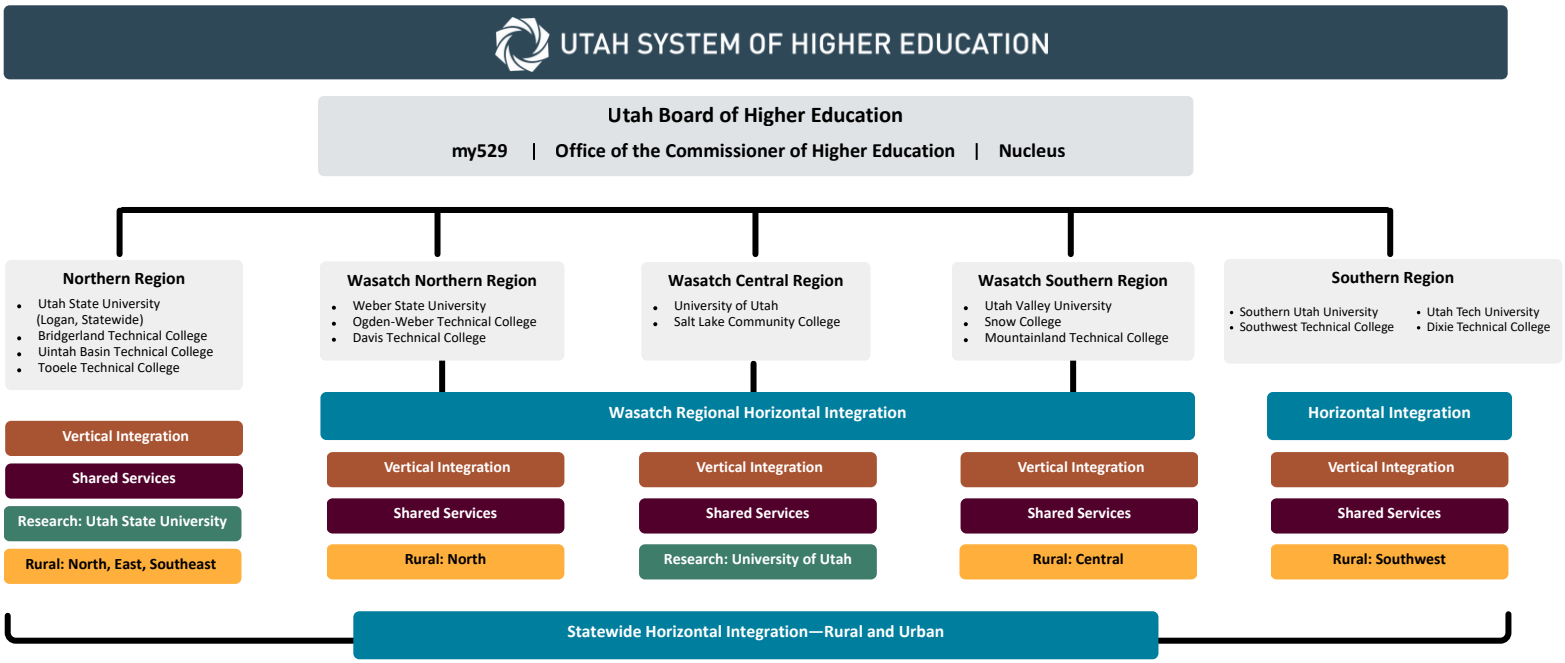
System Redesign

In the 2026 General Legislative Session, the legislature passed HB 352, a bill to strengthen how Utah's public colleges and universities work together as a unified system. The Board fully supported the legislation to redesign Utah's higher education system in order to strengthen coordination, improve student pathways, and ensure institutions can adapt to growth, changing demographics, and evolving workforce needs statewide.

The redesign, unveiled in July 2026, established a framework for region-based integration and collaboration. The framework will expand access to high-value programs, improve student pathways, and use public resources more effectively across the state. It creates opportunities to form academic and research partnerships and build centers of excellence. It changes the focus from enrollment growth to institutional specialization, where each institution serves a unique but complementary mission and role in its region.

The five regions are:

- **Northern**: Utah State University, Bridgerland Tech, Uintah Basin Tech, and Tooele Tech
- **Wasatch North**: Weber State University, Ogden-Weber Tech, and Davis Tech
- **Wasatch Central**: University of Utah and Salt Lake Community College
- **Wasatch South**: Snow College, Utah Valley University, and Mountainland Tech
- **Southern**: Southern Utah University, Utah Tech University, Southwest Tech, and Dixie Tech



System Redesign Guiding Principles

The proposed regional structure was developed using several guiding principles intended to maximize the value of institutional partnerships while preserving access and institutional strengths.

1. **Maximizing Partnership Value:** Regional assignments prioritize institutional combinations with the greatest potential for meaningful collaboration, student mobility, resource sharing, and academic alignment.
2. **Geographic Proximity:** Institutions are grouped based on geography whenever practicable to facilitate frequent collaboration, coordinated service delivery, and strong regional identity.
3. **Complementary Missions:** Regions are designed to include institutions with differing but complementary missions, creating educational pathways for students while allowing institutions to focus on their distinct strengths.
4. **Rural Access:** The framework expands and preserves access to high-quality, in-person higher education opportunities throughout rural Utah.
5. **Reduced Duplication:** The regional model encourages strategic specialization and collaboration instead of unnecessary program duplication, allowing institutions to deploy resources more effectively.
6. **Priority, Not Exclusivity:** Regional partnerships establish primary relationships and priorities but do not limit institutions from pursuing collaborations outside their assigned regions when doing so provides value to students, communities, or the system.

First Implementation Steps

Initial implementation efforts will focus on:

- Establishing integrated admissions and enrollment processes.
- Developing stackable credential pathways.
- Expanding articulation agreements and guaranteed transfer opportunities.
- Aligning and integrating student support services.
- Identifying and implementing opportunities for shared administrative services.

Systemwide Program Plan

In July 2026, the Board reviewed the Systemwide Program Plan, a compilation of new programs the 16 USHE institutions intend to propose in the future. This plan will allow the Office of the Commissioner and the Board to take a more proactive role in program governance and will allow institutions to identify potential areas for collaboration and integration much earlier in the program development life cycle, which allows time to build partnerships.

The goals are to ensure that each new program serves students, Utah's economy, and taxpayers, and that the system moves forward together in these efforts, rather than one institution at a time.

For example, the current Systemwide Program Plan identified emerging trade programs to address state workforce needs in the Nuclear and Energy Sector as well as AI Product Development.

A task force reviewed the Systemwide Program Plan and will bring recommendations to the Board in November 2026, allowing time for institutional Boards of Trustees to approve programs added to the plan before the Board's next annual review in 2027.

2026 General Legislative Session

Utah's Higher Education Resolution

USHE, Governor Cox, and legislative leadership signed a joint resolution reaffirming their shared commitment to keeping Utah's public higher education system student-centered, affordable, accessible, and focused on outcomes that benefit students and the state.

Read the full resolution.



Higher Education Day on the Hill



On February 18, 2026, lawmakers, industry partners, and higher education leaders gathered at the Utah State Capitol for Higher Education Day on the Hill to emphasize the critical link between higher education and the strength of Utah's workforce and economy.

By 2031, 71% of Utah jobs will require postsecondary education. Utah's 16 public institutions are actively meeting this demand, having awarded over 70,000 degrees and certificates in the 2024-25 academic year. We extend our gratitude to the legislative and workforce partners who continually collaborate with USHE to advance the Board's strategic priorities—Access, Completion, Financial Value, and Economic Development—benefiting students and communities statewide.

2026 Session at a Glance

USHE sustained positive momentum and meaningful changes during the 2026 General Session of the Utah State Legislature. The following were accomplished:

- HB 352 advanced system integration and collaboration with a regional system framework.
- SB 240 strengthened and clarified trustee and institutional governance.
- HB 373 established an innovative pilot program to support academic research through $45 million in one-time state funding.
- SB 152 improved data collection and coordination between secondary and postsecondary education to expand student access to postsecondary opportunities during and after high school.
- $83.8 million in new ongoing funding was approved, including investments in compensation, performance funding, technical college capacity, and Talent Ready Utah.
- Substantial one-time funding was provided for research, outcome-based grant programs, and computing capacity to support higher education's use of artificial intelligence.

The 2026 General Legislative Session was a strong year for higher education in Utah. Lawmakers approved significant investments to support both systemwide priorities and institutional initiatives across the state. These investments strengthen the system's ability to expand opportunity for students, meet workforce needs, and continue contributing to Utah's long-term economic growth.

See a detailed list of bills passed and USHE appropriations.



Supporting USHE Presidents

Presidential Leadership Cycle

The Utah Board of Higher Education has taken a deliberate approach to supporting presidents, recognizing that effective leadership requires intentional investment at every stage, from the search and selection process through onboarding, ongoing development, evaluation, and eventual transition. As such, the Board has:

- Refined its hiring practices and implemented contracts for incoming USHE presidents;
- Optimized the evaluation process, including mandatory first-year comprehensive reviews and more frequent evaluations of sitting presidents;
- Finalized the key performance indicators and pay-for-performance framework and embedded it in annual goal-setting to be implemented in the 2026-27 academic year;
- Encouraged presidential professional development through mentorship and coaching support; and
- Launched a statewide succession planning framework which will be implemented in the 2026-27 academic year.

Together, these efforts reflect a partnership between the Board, trustees, and presidents, built on transparency, accountability, and a shared commitment to the success of each institution and the students it serves.

Changes in Institution Presidents

Bridgerland Technical College



Lisa Moon
Interim President of Bridgerland Tech

K. Chad Campbell retired after serving for four decades in Utah's technical education system, including 11 years as president of Bridgerland Tech.

Lisa Moon was appointed interim president of Bridgerland Technical College by the Board in June 2026. Moon, who previously served as executive vice president and chief instructional officer at BTECH, assumed her new role on July 1, 2026.

The Board appointed a search committee to lead the search for the next president, and the search for a long-term leader is underway.

Mountainland Technical College



Kirt Michaelis
President of Mountainland Tech

The Board unanimously selected Kirt Michaelis as Mountainland Tech's new president beginning in December 2026. He steps into the presidency after serving 18 years as MTECH's Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

Clay Christensen announced in May 2026 that he would retire after 20 years of leading one of Utah's largest public technical colleges. His career spans over four decades in Utah's public education landscape, serving in both secondary and postsecondary settings.

Tooele Technical College

Paul Hacking retired from Tooele Technical College in November 2025, after more than eight years of leadership and 30 years of work in technical education. The Board selected Kent Thygerson as interim president of Tooele Tech.

The Board established a search committee to identify an exceptional candidate to advance Tooele Tech's mission, and the search for a long-term president is underway.



Kent Thygerson
Interim President of Tooele Tech

Utah Valley University



Jon Anderson
President of Utah Valley University

Jon Anderson, Ph.D., was unanimously selected by the Board to serve as the next president of Utah Valley University. He began his tenure in August 2026. Anderson previously served as the president of PennWest University

Wayne Vaught, Ph.D., served as acting president during the transition period. He previously served as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. Vaught was appointed after previous president Astrid S. Tuminez stepped down in May 2026.

Weber State University

In May 2026, the Board unanimously selected Chris Mallett, Ed.D., as the next president of Weber State University. He began his tenure in August 2026, after serving as chief administrative officer at Northeastern University's Roux Institute.

Leslie Durham, Ph.D., served as interim president during the transition, following former President Brad Mortensen's appointment as president of Utah State University*.



Chris Mallett
President of Weber State University

*The Utah Board of Higher Education selected Brad Mortensen, Ph.D., as the president of Utah State University, and he assumed the position in November of 2025.

2026 by the Numbers

Operating Budget

In the 2026 General Session, the Legislature appropriated **$83.8 million** in new, ongoing funding for the system's operating budget, including:

$21.2 million in Performance Funding

$7 million to Expand technical college capacity

$3 million for Talent Ready Utah Workforce initiatives

Capital Budget

All dedicated projects were funded as requested, including:

$28.8 million for the Utah State University Animal Science Building renovation

(a dedicated capital project)

Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year 2028

- Dixie Tech's Trades and Technology Building is the Board's top non-dedicated technical college priority for the 2027 General Session.
- The Board's **consensus approach to ranking and advancing institutional budget** requests resulted in more than 97% of new ongoing operating tax dollars supporting consensus request items. The FY 2027-28 budget cycle will continue this approach.
- **New performance funding** is estimated at $16.4 million.
- SB 216 from the 2026 General Session creates a **new growth funding formula**, effective FY 2028. This new formula contemplates both new funding increases and funding clawbacks relative to the year-over-year change in the five-year average FTE enrollment by course level.
- HB 508 from the 2026 General Session creates a **two-stage capital approval process**: first, architectural programming approval; then, design and construction approval once programming is complete.



Data and Analytics

USHE awarded **80,741 certificates and degrees** in 2025-26 Source

USHE maintains an Office of Research and Data Science to provide research, analytics, and dashboards, with a focus on data governance, data systems, and data privacy. The office's insights help guide decision-making for the Board, the Office of the Commissioner, and institutions to drive continuous improvement in student success and alignment with workforce demand.

Data Narratives: Concurrent Enrollment Leads to Student Success

77% of concurrent enrollment students

Earn degrees compared to 34% of non-participants, and finish eight months faster. Source

Technical Education in High School

82% of technical college certificates

Earned in high school are for healthcare professions. Source

60% of technical education students

enrolled in postsecondary education after high school. Source

New **interactive data portal** released this year:

Institutional Funding & Revenue

- Analyze trends in state appropriations, tuition revenue, and institutional funding. Compare allocations and funding changes over time.

Utah Data Research Center

UDRC is a statewide longitudinal database housing data from USHE, the Department of Workforce Services, the Utah State Board of Education, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Through research and interactive data narratives, UDRC informs policy decisions about educational investments and economic opportunity.

Education and the Workforce Pipeline for STEM Students in Utah

This year, they published research on differences in credential attainment, workforce participation, and wage outcomes between STEM and non-STEM students enrolled in USHE degree-granting institutions. They analyzed data from 249,934 unique students enrolled between 2012 and 2020. Source

- Women declaring STEM majors rose from **25.3% to 32.5%.**
- Students who first declared STEM majors were **more than six times as likely** to finish a STEM degree.
- A higher credit completion rate in calculus **increases the odds of STEM graduation by 287%**.
- Median first-year wages were **33.6% higher for USHE STEM graduates** than for non-STEM graduates, **widening to 39.7% by year five**.

Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute Policy Brief

The Benefits of Higher Education to Utah

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute published a report on the impacts of higher education in Utah this year. The report demonstrates that our public higher education system makes significant contributions to earnings, research, and social capital.

- Utah **ranked second in the nation for postsecondary educational attainment** (including certificates and degrees) in 2024.
- Public higher education institutions contribute roughly **$14.0 billion in GDP to Utah's economy**.
- **76.9% of 2025 USHE graduates** earned **high-yield degrees** tied to high-demand occupations.

Credit for Prior Learning

Students saved $72.2 million

in tuition and fees through Credit for Prior Learning this year, which is 19.9% more savings than last year. Source



Explore the full data dashboards and reports at ushe.edu/data-home-portal and udrc.ushe.edu.



A Year of Progress

Strategic Plan: Year Three

The Utah Board of Higher Education approved its comprehensive 2024-27 Strategic Plan in August 2024, establishing a clear roadmap for Utah's higher education system through 2027.

Highlights from the third year of implementation:

- Timely completion rate reached **53.9%**, beating the five-year target of **51.7%**.
- Graduates earning high-yield certificate and degree awards for in-demand jobs reached **76.9%**, outperforming the 2027 target of **74.2%**.
- USHE institutions awarded **13.3%** more certificates and degrees than in 2025.

Track real-time progress and monitor the implementation and success of the plan through the Board Priorities dashboard and Strategic Plan Attainment Goals dashboard.

Utah Board of Higher Education

2024-27 Strategic Plan

- Access
- Completion
- Financial Value
- Economic Development

Our Priorities

Access

Empower prospective students to take full advantage of admissions opportunities, scholarships, financial aid, opportunities to earn college credit during high school, and college and career mapping.

Simplify institutional admissions processes.

Ensure Utah's public higher education system is best poised to serve modern learners.

Completion

Innovate to mitigate or remove barriers that increase time to completion.

Standardize the awarding of credit for prior learning and ensure it aids in timely completion.

Financial Value

Develop and implement measures to reduce or avoid low-value expenditures and create systemwide financial efficiencies.

Reduce costs for students and help them maximize their return on investment.

Ensure the value of a USHE education is commensurate with the cost.

Establish and maintain a long-term plan for cohesive institutional roles and missions to ensure optimal workforce responsiveness and systemwide efficiency.

Economic Development

Meet workforce needs by increasing the completion rates of graduates in high-wage, high-demand programs by 3% by the conclusion of academic year 2026-27.

Advance research that supports economic development and enhances the quality of life in the state.

In partnership with government and industry, advance commercialization and economic development through The Point Innovation District.

Access

First Credential Master Plan

Published in January 2026, the First Credential Master Plan allows every Utah high school student to graduate with a diploma and the opportunity to earn a credential of recognized value, under HB 260 (2025).

The plan creates five pathways to earn a first credential:

1. **Concurrent Enrollment:** Complete 12-18 credits in a "Higher Education Ready" bundle of college-level courses.
2. **Career & Technical Education (CTE) Pathway:** Completion of a state-approved, employer-validated CTE program of study.
3. **Youth Apprenticeship:** Completion of at least 300 hours in an approved program combining paid work-based learning with classroom instruction.
4. **Technical College Certificate:** Completion of an approved certificate (or at least 300 hours toward a credential) from a Utah public technical college.
5. **Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC):** A credential endorsed by an industry body and validated by Utah employers for hiring or advancement.

The plan will be implemented over the next three years. The first year involves foundational setup. Year two will increase program visibility, counselor training, and communication. Year three will move the program to full-scale implementation.

Admit Utah Pilot Project

USHE partnered with the Provo City School District to become the first in the state to pilot a direct data integration with Admit Utah, USHE's seamless college application platform. Through AdmitUtah.org, Provo and Timpview High School seniors could apply to all 16 Utah public colleges and universities in one place, at no cost, as a one-stop shop for college admissions.

The pilot expanded how Admit Utah connects with institutions and students through a new data-sharing agreement between USHE and the Provo City School District. Students opted into the program, chose which Utah public colleges to apply to, and USHE securely shared their information with those institutions.

The Admit Utah pilot offered an opportunity to explore new ways of making the college admissions process more accessible for Utah students. It provided valuable insights into direct admissions, data integration, and admissions workflows that will inform future efforts. USHE will use what it learned from the pilot and stakeholder feedback to identify effective strategies for simplifying the path to postsecondary education.

Higher Education Corrections Council

In FY 2026, Utah's correctional education programs served 1,000 incarcerated adults statewide, including 223 who completed postsecondary credentials or academic development programs through Davis Technical College, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, and Uintah Basin Technical College. SLCC hosted its largest graduating class of incarcerated adults, Snow College held its first graduation ceremony at the Central Utah Correctional Facility, and the program continued to develop virtual coursework for students in maximum-security units.

Expanding Health Education in Rural Utah

In partnership with the Utah Department of Health and Human Services, Talent Ready Utah is administering two Rural Incentive and Skill Expansion (RISE) funding opportunities through Utah's Rural Health Transformation Program. Over the next five years, the program will distribute $30 million to expand healthcare education, credentials, and career pathways in rural Utah.



RISE 2.3: Grow Our Own Rural Health Pipeline
With up to $4 million available, this opportunity supports K–12 and community-based programs that introduce students to healthcare careers and create clear pathways from high school to healthcare certificates, credentials, and degrees. Funded projects will strengthen rural talent pipelines, expand access to credentials, connect completers with rural employment, and serve high-needs populations and Tribal Nations.

RISE 2.4: Expand Non-Graduate Medical Education Rural Healthcare Pipeline
With up to $3 million available, this opportunity supports rural healthcare training outside of graduate medical education. Funding will help develop new training pathways, strengthen education-employer partnerships, build career ladders, and expand apprenticeships and internships. Projects must respond to documented employer demand and lead to measurable credential or employment outcomes, helping connect Utahns with rural healthcare jobs and reduce reliance on traveling staff.

my529 Celebrates 30 Years in Operation

For 30 years, families across Utah and the nation have trusted my529 to save for education and support their children's futures. The program celebrated its anniversary after reaching several milestones in 2026:

- A record **82,376 new accounts were opened in FY 2026**, up 43% from the previous record set the year before.
- Morningstar **awarded my529 its 15th consecutive top rating** in 2025, a feat unmatched by any other 529 plan in the country.
- The assets under management reached **$32.2 billion**.
- The number of accounts has reached approximately 682,000, the highest in my529 history.
- 10.3% of Utah children now have my529 accounts.



With strong fundamentals and a clear strategic vision, my529 is well-positioned to continue leading the industry and helping families invest in brighter futures.



Completion

Utah's public colleges and universities awarded **80,741 certificates and degrees in 2026**, up 13.3% from the previous year and 43.2% since 2021. 68,622 distinct graduates earned those awards—12.0% more than last year and 36.7% more than in 2021.

13.3% more certificates and degrees were awarded than last year.

and

43.2% more rewarded credentials than 2021

Technical colleges are an increasingly important part of the system, accounting for 6.5% of all USHE graduates in 2026. Technical colleges awarded 12,295 certificates, up 9.3% from the previous year and 62.6% since 2021, and had 11,908 distinct graduates—an increase of 9.3% from last year and 65.1% since 2021. USHE technical colleges' most popular programs included Nursing Assistant, EMT/Paramedic, Truck/Bus Driving, Phlebotomy, and Electrician.

Completion data offers a lens into higher education's impact. Across USHE's 16 public colleges and universities, students pursue certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and graduate degrees through pathways designed for individual goals and circumstances. Completion is a central priority for USHE, and we are dedicated to strengthening coordination among institutions, easing student transfer, and connecting students with the support and resources they need to earn their degree.

Concurrent Enrollment Breaks Records

During the 2024–25 academic year, Utah high school students earned record levels of credentials through the Concurrent Enrollment program. Data highlights include:

61,426 high school students participated

495,117 college credit hours earned

$125.2 million saved in tuition at degree-granting institutions

Concurrent enrollment was offered across 218 public, charter, and alternative high schools, the program is successfully accelerating academic momentum and streamlining the transition into higher education.

Technical Education Concurrent Enrollment

With technical education incorporated into Utah's concurrent enrollment framework, high school students can seamlessly earn technical college credit. This aligns coursework, reduces duplication, saves students time and money, and expands access to postsecondary programs.

Scheduling and geographic barriers limit high schoolers' access to on-campus technical training. Further, operating concurrent enrollment and technical education as separate systems causes friction with credit recognition, potentially requiring students to repeat similar coursework.



Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

The initiative to integrate technical education into concurrent enrollment extends eligibility to technical colleges and awards technical college credit that aligns with qualifying high school credit. The initiative expands access at high schools (while preserving on-campus access), reduces curriculum duplication, and accelerates student entry into adult technical programs.

In August 2025, the Commissioner's office established a steering committee to advance the initiative and align curricula, data, and student services. The Board updated Policy R165 to incorporate technical education into the statewide concurrent enrollment model.

Concurrent Enrollment Math Program Nationally Recognized

Just Equations, an independent organization focused on student success in mathematics, recognized Utah's concurrent enrollment math program as a leading model for college math preparation. Our concurrent enrollment math offerings extend beyond a single calculus track to include statistics and quantitative literacy, better aligning coursework with diverse career paths.

This strategic cross-system alignment between K-12 and higher education resulted in a 102% increase in CE math credits earned between 2016 and 2020. As a result, more Utah students are graduating high school with college credits, saving money, and entering postsecondary education much better prepared.

Utah Math Competency Initiative

Utah's Math Competency Initiative, established by the Utah Legislature in 2015 to address math as a barrier to college completion, is also making significant progress. The initiative expands access to quantitative literacy (QL) math pathways through Concurrent Enrollment, offering options better aligned with students' academic and career goals.

By expanding access to aligned math options earlier in a student's academic journey, the initiative helps remove barriers that can slow progress after high school. Together, these programs reflect a powerful, data-backed statewide commitment to improving student readiness, eliminating duplicate coursework, and successfully preparing Utah's graduates for the workforce.

Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) accelerates degree completion by converting out-of-classroom experiences—including military service, employer training, technical college coursework, and standardized exams—into formal college credit.

The program grew substantially this year, with an overall increase of nearly 17,000 credits, driven notably by expanded technical college pathways and challenge exams offered by academic departments at degree-granting institutions. By recognizing these real-world experiences, we continue to make higher education more affordable, flexible, and seamlessly aligned with the workforce.

During the 2024–25 academic year, **38,277 students** used Credit for Prior Learning to earn **263,037 college credits** and save an estimated **$72.2 million in tuition and fees.**

Financial Value

Tuition Affordability

This year, the Board approved sub-inflationary tuition and fee adjustments that reflect its commitment to systemwide affordability. Through thoughtful collaboration, the Board successfully balanced institutional operational needs with maintaining accessible, low-cost higher education.

- **2.82% sub-inflationary** weighted average tuition increase approved for degree-granting institutions, below the 2.96% requested
- Flat or net-neutral tuition rates for technical colleges, with the exception of a general fee reduction for Snow College.

$33 Million in State Aid

In FY 2025, nearly 20,000 students received more than $33 million in state aid for programs supporting financial need, workforce development, academic preparation, and achievement.

USHE processed record volumes of Opportunity and First Credential Scholarship applications from the high school class of 2026.

$33 million awarded to nearly 20,000 students

Higher Education Student Success Endowment



SB 172 (2022) established the Student Success Endowment to support prospective or current students enrolled at a USHE institution.

Since the 2024-25 academic year, the endowment has raised proceeds supporting more than **$16 million** in additional student financial aid and enrollment initiatives. Of that amount, nearly **$12 million was used to supplement the Utah Promise program**, helping Utah students with financial need access higher education.

Increased FAFSA Completion

Highlights from USHE's support of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) this year:

160 FAFSA events hosted by high schools statewide.

9.8% more Utah 12th graders completed the FAFSA compared to the class of 2025.

USHE institutional financial aid volunteers assisted **2,700 students and families** with the application process.

Space Utilization Task Force

In the previous academic year (2024-25), the Office of the Commissioner was asked to assemble a task force to review the space utilization analysis SmithGroup conducted under contract with the Division of Facilities and Construction Management. The task force reviewed the study and recommended improving space planning for all institutions and developing a consensus approach for reporting technical college space utilization.

The task force recommended standardizing data, centralizing utilization reporting, and establishing system-level tracking for hybrid and online course delivery. They also recommended conducting cyclical, on-site facility inventory reviews.

For technical colleges, the task force recommended implementing a simplified reporting taxonomy and a revised utilization model that accurately captures unique, hands-on technical instruction across all relevant campuses.

The Commissioner's office and institutional staff are now taking action on the recommendations and working to implement and refine the consensus technical college space utilization reporting process.

Strategic Reinvestment

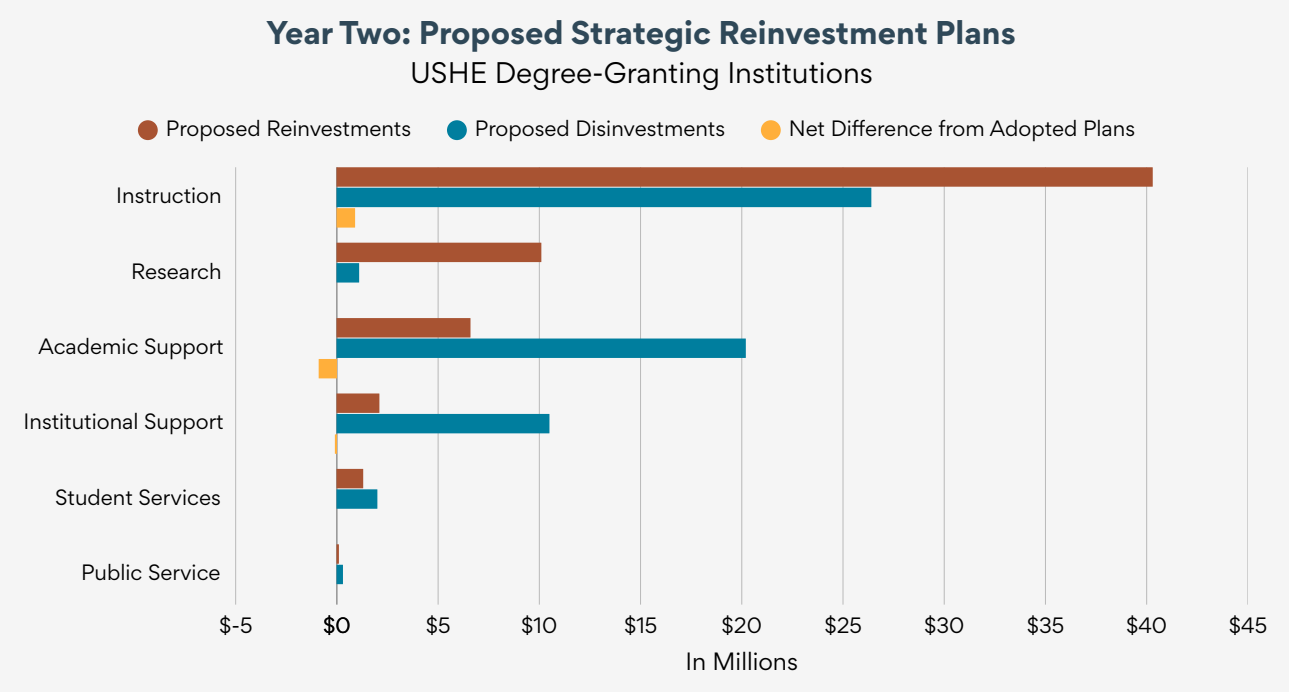
The Utah Board of Higher Education approved Year Two Strategic Reinvestment plans for all eight of the state's degree-granting institutions in June 2026. Enacted during the 2025 General Legislative Session under HB 265, this three-year initiative requires colleges and universities to evaluate expenditures and optimize resources by reinvesting in instructional areas demonstrating strong workforce outcomes and alignment with Utah's economic priorities.

Systemwide implementation is progressing well ahead of statutory requirements. Total net reinvestment in instruction and research has reached nearly $23 million, capturing 83.3% of all reallocated funds. This total includes approximately $1 million in addition to institutions' originally proposed plans.

These reallocated funds are actively driving targeted enhancements across USHE:

- Institutions are hiring additional faculty and expanding instructional resources in high-demand fields, notably engineering, nursing, and artificial intelligence.
- The University of Utah is increasing its net reinvestment in instruction to over $5.9 million.
- Utah State University is increasing its instructional reinvestment to over $1.4 million to support a consolidated AI competency initiative.
- Snow College is maintaining its originally proposed $614,900 reinvestment into instruction while repurposing funds to address increased demand for instructional programming.
- Funding is broadly strengthening research activities and student civic engagement.

Building upon the clear success at degree-granting institutions, the Board is expanding the strategic reinvestment framework to technical colleges. To further support alignment with regional employers and industry demands, technical colleges were required to develop and submit their own strategic reinvestment plans by September 2026.



Economic Development

Talent Ready Five-Year Teacher Apprenticeship Program



In May, Utah launched its first-ever teacher apprenticeship program, the Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection (TRAC) Educator model, to address the pressing need for K-12 teachers. The program is a partnership between the Salt Lake City School District, Talent Ready Utah, Salt Lake Community College, and the University of Utah. The five-year program offers high school juniors a seamless, paid pathway to teacher licensure.

By bringing apprentices into the classroom early, the initiative shifts from the traditional knowledge-transfer models to hands-on, collaborative learning. For high school students, the unique blend of early, paid classroom experience and structured college coursework is a profound opportunity to shape the future of their communities.

Program Highlights:

- Historic First: TRAC is Utah's first apprenticeship pathway specifically designed for future K-12 educators.
- Five-Year Pathway: High school juniors commit to a seamless track combining high school, community college, and university coursework.
- Paid Experience: Students work as paid, part-time employees in the Salt Lake City School District while they learn alongside experienced teachers.
- Degree Options: The apprenticeship culminates in a bachelor's degree and teacher licensure in either elementary education or special education.
- Human-Centered Focus: The model prioritizes collaborative, hands-on teaching skills to ensure educators remain highly relevant in an era of easily accessible digital knowledge.
- Proven Foundation: The education initiative builds on the success of the district’s pioneering TRAC Manufacturing Apprenticeship, which launched in 2019.

Custom Fit Trains 16,700 Employees

The Custom Fit program upskills employees in high-demand sectors like construction, advanced manufacturing, and life sciences. It heavily supports small, rural, and women-owned businesses, dedicating over a third of its training to industry certifications driving local economic growth and workforce retention. It is jointly funded by $6.1 million from employers and $6.3 million from the state.

In FY 2025, the program delivered:

- **Over 451,000 hours** of customized training
- **Instructed 16,700 employees** across **1,847 companies**

$100 Million in Grants Awarded for Career-Connected Learning

This year, the APEX Center Grant Program awarded over **$100 million to 29 local education agencies** to expand hands-on, career-connected learning for K-12 students.

The Board, USHE, and Talent Ready Utah administer the grants collaboratively, which fund project-based education in high-demand fields. By aligning high school programs with regional workforce needs and postsecondary pathways, APEX minimizes duplication and helps students seamlessly transition into higher education and employment. The partnership also establishes shared infrastructure, including a business-to-education matchmaking platform, to drive long-term workforce alignment.

Utah Talent Hub

The Utah Talent Hub is an online platform that connects Utah college students with internships, apprenticeships, project-based learning, and early-career jobs. The platform is supported by Talent Ready Utah and USHE institutions.

90% of platform users are job seekers. One-third are undergraduate students, with strong representation from master's and doctoral students.

This year, USHE supported employer adoption of Utah Talent Hub hiring with communication, check-ins, and simplified processes. Continuous platform enhancements are improving the user experience. The Talent Hub is also exploring a partnership with BioHive for campus chapter tours.

High-demand talent areas on the platform align well with statewide workforce goals centered around user interest in life sciences, engineering, technology, and business.

Youth Apprenticeship Governance Council

The Youth Apprenticeship Governance Council was established in May 2026, following the passage of SB 195 (2026 General Session). The council represents multiple state agencies, USHE institutions, K-12 education, and employers.

The council's purpose is a systematic, industry cluster-driven approach to expanding youth apprenticeships through Utah's education systems. The council is working to establish industry-recognized state certification through the Department of Commerce, aligned with the First Credential program. They're studying leading examples of international and U.S.-based apprenticeship program models and will seek to expand TRAC programs around targeted industry clusters.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Board approved a landmark resolution in December 2025 setting a statewide strategic direction for integrating artificial intelligence (AI) across USHE colleges and universities. Driven by the pro-human philosophy championed by Governor Cox, the direction aims to prepare students for an AI-accelerated economy while maintaining ethical guardrails that honor Utah's core values.

The Board's resolution outlines three imperatives:

1. Equip students with AI skills. Graduates across all majors should possess foundational AI literacy and applied, human-centered competencies that amplify critical thinking and creativity.
2. Transform education and research. Integrate AI responsibly into teaching, student services, and research to personalize learning and improve efficiency while preserving human mentorship.
3. Reimagine higher education. Empower institutions to offer flexible, future-focused programs that support both technical skills and Utah's broader economic prosperity.

To execute this vision, the Board launched an AI Task Force made up of 11 leaders from business, education, and government. Chaired by Board member Cydni Tetro, the task force will drive coordination between institutions and industry to advance the state's strategic AI priorities. The task force will develop actionable recommendations that support the responsible use of AI in classrooms, protect student well-being, and ensure tight alignment with local employers.

AI Workforce Credential

As its first major action, the task force is advancing a university-issued AI Workforce Credential. Developed in partnership with the Governor's AI Pro-Human Committee, Talent Ready Utah, and statewide employers, this credential is designed to complement students' existing fields of study with high-demand AI capabilities. Beginning July 1, 2026, more than 50,000 graduates from the classes of 2025, 2026, and 2027 will be eligible to earn this credential at no cost through a statewide online learning environment.

By merging forward-thinking policy with practical, accessible upskilling opportunities, USHE is ensuring that students emerge as competitive, responsible leaders in the modern, AI-driven labor market.

Nucleus Institute Highlights

The Nucleus Institute was established in late 2025 (per HB 530 in 2025) to unite higher education, industry, and government into a single statewide system for economic innovation. During AY 2025-26:



- Governor Cox announced construction of Convergence Hall at The Point, targeted for completion in 2029.
  - The mixed-use building will include event spaces, residences, retail, and workspace.
  - The workspace will include a state-of-the-art prototype lab.
  - Groundbreaking occurred in fall 2026.
- Governor Cox announced the creation of AI Moonshot in alignment with the Pro-Human AI Initiative. AI Moonshot is pro-human AI academic research aimed at finding economically impactful solutions for Utah's unique problems that move the needle for our state's workforce and economy.
- PolicyLab will produce research reports for the Utah Legislature, with interns delivering policy briefs, memos, and issue primers to lawmakers.
- The fund made 8 initial investments totaling $2 million, plus $486,000 in follow-on investments. It employs 20 student analysts per semester.
- ConvergeAI held events at eight Utah campuses, bringing AI companies and academic researchers together in discussion forums.
- Boost Conferences– one day entrepreneurship and innovation events–were held at Utah Valley University, Utah State University, and Utah Tech University.


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