2021

STRATEGIC PLAN

UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NOTE

This is the currently approved strategic plan. USHE staff is currently in the process of reviewing and editing the plan alongside their teams and our institutions.

Proposed revisions will be discussed in the upcoming Board meeting (January 2023), and a final updated plan will be proposed to the Board for approval later this year.

MISSION

The Utah Board of Higher Education governs and supports the Utah System of Higher Education to equitably provide accessible, valuable, innovative, and affordable higher education for students to expand their economic mobility, enhance their cultural awareness, and improve their overall quality of life.

VISION

The Board will ensure the System provides every Utahn—in every place and every circumstance—an affordable certificate or degree at a USHE institution that will meaningfully improve their lives through economic opportunity, civic engagement, and personal fulfillment.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, Utah's two higher education systems merged, creating a single system of 16 colleges and universities. The newly-created Utah Board of Higher Education adopted a strategic plan in May 2021 to guide the new System for the next five years.

To develop the strategic plan, the Board and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education engaged in a rigorous, collaborative, and creative process that built on past initiatives from previous boards and incorporated feedback from institutions, state leaders, students, and other stakeholders.

CENTERING EQUITY

Utah's higher education landscape continues to see significant structural and systemic gaps reflected in postsecondary enrollment and completion rates when disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. When comparing Utah college enrollment numbers of Utahns ages 18 to 35, enrollment rates of students of color are as much as 40% below that of white students. Similar gaps exist in the completion rates of students at USHE institutions: postsecondary attainment of students of color is as much as 35% below that of white students.

The Utah Board of Higher Education is committed to utilizing the newly-adopted equity lens framework to identify and address barriers to equity of opportunity for all Utahns. The equity lens framework begins with the shared belief that every student has the ability to learn. With that understanding, the Board recognizes its position to ensure structural barriers are removed so that all students have access to equitable, safe, and conducive learning environments. To guide the Utah Board of Higher Education in its adoption of policies, initiatives, and strategies, the Board is committed to implementing the practical exercise of the **equity lens framework** to ensure all efforts are focused on closing attainment gaps for Utah students.

Measuring for equity
The strategic plan includes goals for underrepresented population success within each priority. The Board has a full definition of "underrepresented" in the **Equity Lens Framework**: *"Any student group that has traditionally held a smaller percentage of the total higher education population. For the purposes of this framework, these are student groups who are disproportionately represented in comparison to an equivalent counterpart."*

Subgoals within the strategic plan focused on underrepresented students are aligned with currently available data and are defined as those populations that are underrepresented within each of the following priorities:

- **Access:** low-income students and historically marginalized students of color: Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Pacific Islander, Native American, and students who identify as multiracial.
- **Completion:** historically marginalized students of color: Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Pacific Islander, Native American, and students who identify as multiracial.
- **Workforce Alignment:** women and the following student populations: Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Pacific Islander, Native American, Asian, and students who identify as multiracial.

By centering equity in the strategic plan, the Board has committed to question and disrupt how things have always been in order to reimagine a postsecondary education system that fosters equitable access and success, creates pathways for economic mobility, and work toward a high quality of life for each student and their communities.

MEASURING SUCCESS

The Utah Board of Higher Education aligned several disparate systemwide measures into a single cohesive measuring system to track progress toward statewide attainment goals. This includes alignment between the state's attainment goal, institutional performance measures, and the Board's five-year strategic plan.

10-year statewide attainment goals
The 10-year statewide attainment goals were set in 2020 by the Utah Higher Education Strategic Planning Commission. These statewide attainment goals align with the Board priorities of Access, Completion, and Workforce Alignment. The measures are linked: increasing success in access will call for more effort in timely completion; increasing success in completion will call for more effort in workforce alignment.
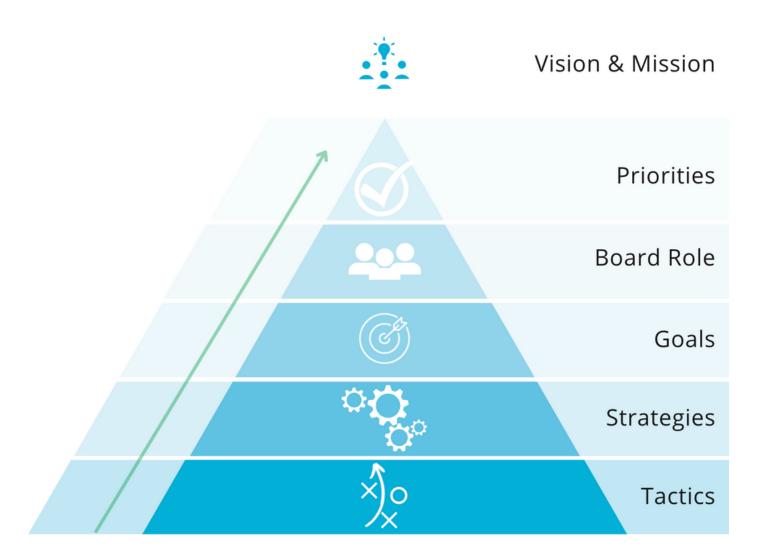
5-year strategic plan goals
The Board's five-year goals, outlined in this strategic plan, will serve as the midpoint measure toward the statewide ten-year attainment goals. The strategic plan includes goals for underrepresented population success within each priority. The goals are set at rates that address closing statewide equity attainment gaps.

Year-over-year institutional goals tied to performance funding
The Board's five-year strategic plan goals will guide institutions' goals for performance funding. The Commissioner's office provided data to institutions showing their historical data for the attainment goal measures for subgoals. Institutions will work with their boards of trustees to set five-year and annual performance funding goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE

Vision & Mission

Priorities

Board Role

Goals

Strategies

Tactics

PRIORITIES

System Leadership

Access

Affordability

Completion

Workforce Alignment

Research

BOARD ROLE

When developing the strategic plan, the Board examined the four levers that would ensure the outcomes resulting from the implementation of the plan are in areas that the Board can best impact.

The levers of the Board include:

1. Policy
2. Research/Analysis
3. Funding
4. Collaboration/Advocacy

Within the strategic plan, the Board's role is reflected in the strategies and tactics for each priority.

1. **System Leadership:** Oversee and lead the Utah System of Higher Education for the benefit of all Utahns.
2. **Access**: Remove structural barriers to entry.
3. **Affordability:** Remove structural barriers to affordability.
4. **Completion:** Remove structural barriers to graduation.
5. **Workforce Alignment:** Prioritize and incentivize the approval of high-demand, high-wage programs aligned with workforce.
6. **Research:** Advocate for the role of research and support funding for research.

System Leadership

🎯 **Develop, strengthen, and leverage an equitable, seamless, and articulated system of higher education built on a foundation of quality, excellence, and remarkable student outcomes.**

Strategies

Provide strategic oversight for institutional roles and missions and program offerings to fully incorporate all institutions within a single system.
- Align programs within institutional roles and address unnecessary program duplication across the System.
- Revise policies governing institutional roles and award types across degree-granting institutions and technical colleges and faculty workload at degree-granting institutions.

Unify System policies, data, and measures.
- Review policies to ensure alignment between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions.
- Align data and measurements between tech colleges and degree-granting institutions.

Engage boards of trustees on delegated responsibilities.
- Train boards of trustees on program approval process (include verifiable workforce needs); tuition processes; equity, diversity, and inclusion; etc. Develop ongoing training for trustees.
- Develop qualifications for Board members that prioritize equity and diversity. Advocate that boards of trustees have similar qualifications.
- Facilitate Board of Trustees consortium group.

Reevaluate presidential evaluation and R&R processes.
- Support presidents in meeting the expectations of the Board, including incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion in evaluations and R&R.

Leverage Board policies and System leadership to close attainment gaps for each Utahn.
- Review and revise all USHE policies aligned with closing attainment gaps through an equity lens on a three-year basis.
- Train Board, System, and institutional leadership on USHE Equity Lens Framework and concepts related to excellence in equity-mindedness and shared equity leadership.
- Leverage System leadership to address equity-related practices and initiatives.
- Conduct and assess statewide marketing campaign.

Implement shared services
- Assess and prioritize opportunities for expanding shared services across institutions.
- Support the implementation of shared services and measure gains in quality, risk mitigation, financial sustainability, and cost efficiency.

Strengthen and develop educational pathways to increase students' access to and completion of higher education aligned to Utah's workforce.

- Lead cross-agency cooperation to create a shared goal and definition of educational pathways within Utah.
- Collaborate with USBE, USHE institutions, and OCHE units to lead and coordinate all college-in-high school programs and pathways containing postsecondary coursework or credentials.
- Develop a data collection and reporting framework to assess the quality of educational pathways within Utah.
- Train and support Utah's Regional Pathways Coordinators to develop and implement clear educational pathways from technical colleges to regional universities.
- Utilize Talent Ready Utah's connection to the workforce to align educational attainment with industry-validated occupations.

Access

🎯 **Increase the college-going rate of high school grads by 3% in 5 years.**

🎯 **Increase the college-going rate of underrepresented groups by 4% in 5 years.**

Strategies

—— **Ensure high school students are meaningfully informed on scholarships, dual enrollment programming, financial aid, and higher education pathways.**

- Expand the Utah College Advising Corps statewide. Determine the effectiveness of alternate program models. Evaluate program data to determine efficacy and best practices.
- Facilitate greater regional collaboration among college access partners, with a focus on networking, training, and working toward shared college access goals aligned with the Board's Strategic Plan.
- Provide accessible training to access partners on USHE access programming to prepare them for meaningful conversations about postsecondary options.
- In partnership with Success in Education, redevelop the USHE segment of the Keys to Success mobile app to provide the most actionable and essential pieces of information to high school students during their college selection process.

—— **Simplify institutional admissions processes.**

- Identify system-level ways to simplify the admissions process for students and institutions.
- Connect institutions to high school student data to improve access, particularly for underrepresented student populations. Implement the Single Student Identifier systemwide. Analyze available data to determine more inclusive future measures.

—— **Support institutions in helping students secure their basic needs.**

- Empower institutions to adopt relevant best practices and deploy staff to case-manage with students in need of institutional and external basic needs services.
- Elevate higher education's representation in state and local poverty reduction initiatives and enhance the Board's role in advocating for funding and policies that support institutional basic needs work.

Affordability

🎯 **Increase student ability to pay the cost of attendance.**

🎯 **Ensure institutional costs of attendance remain within the standard of affordability year over year.**

Strategies

Improve fiscal transparency and understanding.

- Develop and implement full cost of attendance reporting standards and tools.
- Refine the Board's standard of affordability.

Coordinate and optimize financial aid.

- Evaluate, prioritize, and implement state student financial aid and scholarships.
- Streamline statewide H.B.144 affidavit process. Benchmark student participation in affidavits. Clarify how citizenship data is collected and used in relation to scholarships and admissions forms.
- Review and analyze the use of tuition waivers and identify opportunities for enhancing their efficacy.
- Evaluate the quality, effectiveness, and return on investment of existing scholarship and financial aid programs; identify opportunities for better coordination and improvement.

Increase completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

- Partner with USBE to consider ways to increase FAFSA completion in high school. Develop and implement a statewide FAFSA strategy.

Ensure institutions maintain strong fiscal health and operational efficiency.

- Create a standardized cost structure model to compare the cost of delivering credentials across USHE and other relevant institutions.
- Develop and implement a fiscal health assessment tool.
- Update capital facilities funding policies and procedures to encourage efficient planning and requests.

Completion

- **Increase timely completion of degrees and awards by 3% in 5 years.**
- **Increase the timely completion of underrepresented students by 4% in 5 years.**

Strategies

Facilitate completion and transfer among institutions within the System.
- Conduct a transfer study to determine barriers to transfer.
- Facilitate coordination between institutions and among both technical and academic disciplines to align program structure and support transfer and completion.
- Review and update policies related to transfer and award structure.
- Transition technical education from clock hours to credit hours.

Standardize awarding of credit for prior learning and ensure PLA aids in completion.
- Implement consistent practices for the award of articulated credit, including training of faculty and staff, and annual institutional reporting of articulated credit awarded. Assess the impact of the award of articulated credit on student enrollment and completion.

Ensure systemwide institutional supports for student mental health and campus safety.
- Identify and implement system-based mental health strategies and policies in accordance with institution mental health strategic plans being developed in partnership with JED Foundation and Huntsman Mental Health Institute.
- Connect institutions with Title IX training opportunities, and support and empower institutions in developing strategies to address campus safety.

Expand supportive entry-level education practices.
- Develop standards for placement, supportive instruction, co-requisite remediation, and other models to support student entry into and success in introductory academic college-level coursework and technical education.

Workforce Alignment

⊙ **Increase the completion rate of graduates in high-demand, high-wage programs by 7% in 5 years.**

⊙ **Increase the completion rate of underrepresented groups in programs aligned with high-wage, high-demand jobs by 8% in 5 years.**

Strategies

Engage industry to align education with workforce demands that result in career placements.
- Convene Industry Alignment Workgroups to identify talent gaps to develop short-term and long-term workforce development programs.
- Implement and administer state and federal workforce grant initiatives.
- Ensure efforts are consistent with State workforce projections, are data-driven to target industries, and align with high-demand occupations.

Initiate industry feedback loops with the Utah Board of Higher Education.
- Create and implement an Industry Engagement and Workforce Alignment process for OCHE.
- Utilize the DMAIC methodology to drive alignment efforts in collaboration with Workforce Panels and Board Leadership.
- Leverage the USHE Cyclical Institutional Program Review (R411) process to proactively gauge alignment with industry.

Develop legislative priorities, policies, and funding requests for workforce development programs.
- Collaborate with the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission (UEOC) to develop statewide Talent priorities.
- Coordinate and partner with industry and education to develop short-term pre-employment training and short-term early employment training that meet the needs of businesses creating jobs and economic growth in the state.
- Collaborate with the UEOC Talent Subcommittee to facilitate creating and expanding apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities for Utah students.

Increase stakeholder collaboration to develop and promote workforce programs.
- Establish workgroups of education, industry, and state agencies to coordinate workforce initiatives while increasing access for unrepresented populations.
- Train & utilize TRU Apprenticeship Coordinators and Regional Pathways Coordinators to provide employer outreach and information regarding workforce initiatives.

- Develop a Talent Dashboard to provide data showing the scope, progress, and performance of employment training.

Increase student participation in high-quality Work-Based Learning.

- Develop a process to create and expand TRU K-12 workforce programs.
- Expand the Utah Adopt-A-School program assigned by Governor Cox to increase K-12 student access to work-based learning.
- Draft a policy to define systemwide practices for participation and reporting of work-based learning activities.
- Collaborate with Regional Pathways Coordinators to engage industry in education programs aligned with workforce needs.

Research

⌖ **Leverage the resources and the agenda of the Utah System of Higher Education to bolster Utah's communities, culture, and economy and position Utah as a leader in the global knowledge economy through research and discovery, scholarship and creativity, and technological innovation.**

Strategies

The Board shall use policy to identify the expectations for research and scholarly activities within defined institutional roles and support the strengths and priorities of individual institutions.

- Update Policy R485, *Faculty Workload*. Institutional roles reflect expectations for the level of engagement in scholarly activities and innovation in policies on institutional roles and missions and faculty workload. Faculty may take on various designated roles within the institution, from a primary research role to a combined teaching and research role, to a focus almost exclusively on teaching. The Board recognizes faculty efforts to engage in meaningful and consistent research, scholarship, and creative activities and to provide opportunities for students to engage in research and creative activities.

Establish expectations for student participation in research, scholarship, or applied technology at all 16 USHE institutions suitable to defined institutional roles.

- Promote degree-granting institutions' efforts to earn the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement or Leadership for Public Purposes Classifications.
- Facilitate opportunities for students to participate in research, applied learning, work-based learning, or community-engaged learning as part of the award program structure at technical colleges, community colleges, regional universities, and research universities.
- Strengthen the pipeline of underrepresented Utahns into graduate research and professional programs and careers.

The Board shall promote the research agenda for the state system and leverage the scholarship generated by USHE institutions, consistent with their institutional roles, to help enhance communities, culture, quality of life, and economic development of the State of Utah.

- Identify significant challenges and opportunities facing Utah's citizens, communities, regions, the state, and the world and mobilize the system's resources to address them.
- Recognize the unique role and expectations of research universities.

The Board shall increase public awareness and understanding of the state system's stewardship of resources and the impact of research produced by USHE institutions.

- Measure and communicate the impact of:
    - Delivery of knowledge to advance the health, welfare, cultural enrichment, and economy through community and business engagement and service at all 16 USHE institutions.
    - Undergraduate students' civic engagement and global learning at all 16 USHE institutions as a leading system in the national AACU Civic Evidence Project.
    - Grants, research funding, entrepreneurship and transfer activity, national recognition of research faculty, and other measures.
- Increase awareness of student research opportunities and career pathways for K-12 and USHE students.