2021
STRATEGIC PLAN
UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

USHE.EDU
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 committee meetings (August & September 2022), and a final updated plan will be proposed to the Board for approval in September 2022.
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.
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.
PRIORITIES

System Unification
Access
Affordability
Completion
Workforce Alignment
Research
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 Unification:** Develop, strengthen and leverage a seamless and articulated system of higher education.
2. **Access:** Remove structural barriers to entry.
3. **Affordability:** Remove structural barriers to affordability
4. **Completion:** Remove structural barriers to graduation
5. **Workforce Alignment:** Increase availability and stackability of high-demand, high-wage programs.
6. **Research:** Advocate for the role of research and support funding for research.
Develop, strengthen, and leverage a seamless and articulated system of higher education.

**Strategies**

---

**Align programs with institutional roles and minimize duplication among institutions.**

**Degree-Granting Tactics**
- Study current program offerings across degree-granting institutions to ensure fit with institutional roles.

**Technical Education Tactics**
- Study current program offerings across technical colleges to ensure fit with institutional roles.

---

**Increase stackability of credentials from technical colleges to degree-granting institutions.**

**Degree-Granting Tactics**
- Review policy governing award types across degree-granting institutions to ensure policies are equity-minded, supported by data, and allow for stackability across all institutional types. Review policy R473, R401, and R472 for articulation and transfer between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. Update Policy R470 to embed equity, diversity, and inclusion in foundational training requirements.
- Develop a standardized approach to understand the number of students utilizing current articulations between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions.

**Technical Education Tactics**
- Review policy governing award types across degree-granting institutions to ensure policies are equity-minded, supported by data, and allow for stackability across all institutional types. Review policy R473, R401, and R472 for articulation and transfer between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. Embed equity, diversity, and inclusion in foundational training requirements.
- Develop a standardized approach to understand the number of secondary students receiving credit for course work completed at the high school.
- Explore the potential for transitioning technical education from clock hours to credit hours.
Merge system policies and align data and measures as appropriate.

**Degree-Granting Tactics**
- Review policies to ensure alignment between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. Regularly review System policies to ensure they are equity-focused.
- Align data and measurements between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions when appropriate

**Technical Education Tactics**
- Review policies to ensure alignment between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. Regularly review System policies to ensure they are equity-focused.
- Align data and measurements between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions when appropriate.

Train boards of trustees on delegated responsibilities.

**Degree-Granting Tactics**
- 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.

**Technical Education Tactics**
- 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.

Streamline presidential evaluation and R&R processes.

**Degree-Granting Tactics**
- Support presidents in meeting expectations of the Board, including incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion in evaluations and R&R.

**Technical Education Tactics**
- Support presidents in meeting expectations of the Board, including incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion in evaluations and R&R.
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.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Fund statewide expansion of the Utah College Advising Corps (UCAC). Evaluate program data to determine efficacy and best practices.
- Facilitate collaboration among college access partners such as TRIO, GEAR UP, AVID, Latinos in Action, USHE Concurrent Enrollment Directors, Career and Technical Education directors, institutions, and advisors.
- Standardize structural and systemic processes and policies to ensure access to Concurrent Enrollment and technical education in high school.

Technical Education Tactics
- Fund statewide expansion of the Utah College Advising Corps (UCAC). Ensure advisors are meaningfully trained on technical education opportunities. Evaluate program data to determine efficacy and best practices.
- Facilitate collaboration among college access partners such as TRIO, GEAR UP, AVID, Latinos in Action, USHE Concurrent Enrollment Directors, Career and Technical Education directors, institutions, and advisors.
- Standardize structural and systemic processes and policies to ensure access to Concurrent Enrollment and technical education in high school.

Simplify institutional admissions processes.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- 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.
Technical Education Tactics
- 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.

Ensure systemwide institutional supports for student basic needs.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Develop baseline expectations for student basic needs for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.

Technical Education Tactics
- Develop baseline expectations for student basic needs for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.

Support institutions and the Utah State Board of Education in diversifying the pipeline of P-20 educators, faculty, and staff.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Review policy to support all USHE institutions in their efforts to attract and retain diverse faculty and staff. Facilitate collaboration on best equitable hiring and retention practices.
- Use T.H. Bell Scholarship to recruit and financially support underrepresented students into the educator and counselor workforce.

Technical Education Tactics
- Review policy to support all USHE institutions in their efforts to attract and retain diverse faculty and staff. Facilitate collaboration on best equitable hiring and retention practices.
Affordability

Increase student ability to pay the cost of attendance.
Ensure institutional cost of attendance remains within the standard of affordability year over year.

Strategies

— Develop an expanded standard of affordability.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Standardize the cost of attendance across all USHE institutions.

Technical Education Tactics
- Standardize the cost of attendance across all USHE institutions.

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

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Study FAFSA completion in Utah and determine best practices from other states.
- Partner with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to consider ways to increase FAFSA completion in high school. Develop and implement a statewide FAFSA strategy.

Technical Education Tactics
- Study FAFSA completion in Utah and determine best practices from other states.
- Partner with USBE to consider ways to increase FAFSA completion in high school. Develop and implement a statewide FAFSA strategy.

— Evaluate and prioritize state student financial aid.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Review policy, statute, and procedures on waivers. Identify how waivers are being used at each institution.
- Implement, evaluate, and prioritize state 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.
Technical Education Tactics
- Review policy, statute, and procedures on waivers. Identify how waivers are being used at each institution.
- Implement, evaluate, and prioritize state scholarships.
- Clarify how citizenship data is collected and used in relation to scholarships and admissions forms.

— Develop a cost structure model to compare the cost of delivering degrees and awards for each USHE institution.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Create a model to compare the cost of delivering degrees and awards for each USHE institution.

Technical Education Tactics
- Create a model to compare the cost of delivering degrees and awards for each USHE institution.
- Expand cost study to include technical education.

— Expand shared services.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Study shared services in the System. The Board will review recommendations from the study.
- Create an implementation plan for shared services. Create policy to have cost savings realized from shared services used for student aid.

Technical Education Tactics
- Study shared services in the System. Board reviews recommendations from the study.
- Create an implementation plan for shared services. Create policy to have cost savings realized from shared services used for student aid.
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

Structure awards to facilitate completion and transfer.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Conduct a transfer study to determine barriers to transfer.
- Facilitate coordination among academic disciplines to align program structure to support transfer and completion as appropriate.

Technical Education Tactics
- Conduct a transfer study to determine barriers to transfer.
- Facilitate coordination among programs to align program structure to support transfer wherever possible.

Increase awarding of credit for prior learning.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Implement annual institutional reporting of credit for prior learning, proactive communications to students, and training of faculty and staff and assess the impact of credit for prior learning on student completion. Ensure standardization in the awarding of credit for prior learning and the transferability of credit for prior learning.

Technical Education Tactics
- Implement annual institutional reporting of credit for prior learning, proactive communications to students, and training of faculty and staff and assess the impact of credit for prior learning on student completion. Ensure standardization in the awarding of credit for prior learning and the transferability of credit for prior learning.

Ensure systemwide institutional supports for student mental health and campus safety.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Develop baseline expectations for mental health for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.
• Develop baseline expectations for student safety for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.

**Technical Education Tactics**

• Develop baseline expectations for mental health for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.

• Develop baseline expectations for student safety for degree-granting and technical institutions. Support institutions in meeting baseline expectations. Facilitate collaboration on best practices.

——— Expand supportive entry-level education practices.

**Degree-Granting Tactics**

• Refine policy to develop standards for placement, supportive instruction, corequisite remediation, and other models to support student entry into and success in introductory academic college-level coursework.

**Technical Education Tactics**

• Refine policy for supportive instruction offerings for students unable to meet minimum admission requirements and implement corequisite and other models to support student entry in and success into technical programs.
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

—— Increase higher education participation rate of adults with/without a high school diploma.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Collaborate with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to support the enrollment of adult learners in academic education.
- Identify what institutional services are currently supporting higher education for incarcerated individuals. Determine if System intervention is needed.

Technical Education Tactics
- Collaborate with DWS and USBE to support the enrollment of adult learners in technical education.
- Identify what institutional services are currently supporting higher education for incarcerated individuals. Determine if System intervention is needed.
- Increase awareness of reskilling/upskilling for employed students to increase wage and employment progression.

—— Ensure students are meaningfully informed on the value and return on investment (ROI) of higher education.

Degree-Granting Tactics
- Streamline and simplify all college and career readiness tools for K-12 students and adults, creating as integrated an experience as possible that benefits students without undermining function
- Advocate for a statewide marketing campaign. Focus on the unique needs of adult learners.

Technical Education Tactics
- Streamline and simplify all college and career readiness tools for K-12 students and adults, creating as integrated an experience as possible that benefits students without undermining function
Advocate for a statewide marketing campaign. Focus on the unique needs of adult learners.

Ensure technical education program information, articulation of secondary course work, and opportunities for educational, career, and wage progression are represented in USHE online tools.

---

**Increase student participation in work-based learning.**

**Degree-Granting Tactics**

- Consider policy to define systemwide practices for participation and reporting of work-based learning activities. Develop systemwide practices for participation in work-based learning activities.

**Technical Education Tactics**

- Consider policy to define systemwide practices for participation and reporting of work-based learning activities. Develop systemwide practices for participation in work-based learning activities.
Research

TBD

Strategies

Advocate for the role of research at degree-granting institutions in innovation, technology transfer, economic development/workforce, and community engagement and impact.

Degree-Granting Tactics

• Build research into the legislative narrative and integrate the role of research into a strategic marketing campaign. Consider mechanism for research to be more ingrained in the Board discussions and decisions.
• Utilize Point of the Mountain Innovation Hub.

Ensure institutions have needed support to conduct research.

Degree-Granting Tactics

• Consider one-time funds in the 2022 budget request to support research facilities.
• Include high-impact research initiatives in the Board budget process.
• Identify state-level issues, rely on degree-granting institutions to lead out on innovations and solutions, and serve as leaders for other institutions through demonstrated partnerships and strategic funding.