



UTAH SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION

# MEMORANDUM

November 18, 2022

## Technical Education Committee Report

During its meeting on October 21, 2022, the Technical Education Committee held discussions on the following topics:

### **Credit Transition**

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth reminded the committee of the approvals that COE has granted for Davis, Dixie, and Southwest Technical Colleges. These institutions can begin the implementation of credit as soon as changes to tuition and fees are approved.

Senior Assistant Commissioner Russell Galt has been working with presidents and financial officers on changes to tuition and fees associated with the transition to credit. In their May meeting, this group established guiding principles for developing a credit-based tuition model and established a road map to move forward. The new model will include standard tuition, differential tuition, and course fees. It was determined that general student fees would not be charged at technical colleges, but any general fees currently being charged would be rolled into tuition. The discussion also included timelines for implementation and a review of the estimate of the future institutional credits that are based on current membership hours. The group developed a range for what the new credit rate should be. Since then, the group has met several times to correct, clarify, and refine this process. At the September 16 Board meeting, the Board approved several tuition-related policies that needed to be revised for these changes to be made.

At the most recent meeting, this group developed a range for the institutions to consider for standard tuition rates (between \$95-\$105 per credit hour). As most of the fees will be rolled into the tuition rate, this should mean little to no increase for students overall. This aligns with the transparency objectives that the state auditor has asked for. The credit-based tuition rates will be ready for approval in the March Board meeting. The Commissioner's office is working with the governor and legislators to verify compliance.

### **Program Alignment**

Nine programs were presented for alignment: four single-institution programs, and five programs offered at multiple institutions.

The committee felt there might be a conflict in the appropriate role and mission with the Paramedic Program, which is also offered by degree-granting institutions (Utah Valley University, Weber State University, and Utah Tech University). Bridgerland Technical College said the entry-level credential for a paramedic is at the certificate level. They said there is a shortage of paramedics in their geographic region.

It was suggested that as part of the Board directive to clarify institution roles and missions and address unnecessary duplication, the Commissioner's office consider programs like Paramedic to determine if they align with a designated role and mission and whether there are employment opportunities at each educational level. The committee asked to hold off on the alignment of Paramedic until this work is complete.

It was determined that the other programs meet the initiative's intent and align with the institution's roles and missions. The committee motioned to move the programs to the full Board with further research into Paramedic Program.

### **Programs vs. Short-Term Training Characteristics**

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth briefly reviewed concerns about aligned program proposals brought up during the last committee meeting.

- There was concern about whether employers or students could readily distinguish between multiple programs offered in the same occupational area. The committee recommended programs represent broad occupations in employable areas that can provide a living wage and, as possible, build into programs that contribute to job growth opportunities and increases in wage potential.
- There were a few program alignment requests that were 1-3 credits. The committee expressed concern about whether training this short should be classified as a program or short-term training. The committee does not want to diminish the value of the certificate by awarding the same credential for training that might take weeks to complete vs. training that is regulated or might take more than a year to complete. This included concern about awarding the same credential for graduating from a full program as part(s) of a program.
- There was concern about programs that may be targeted to a certain employer or employer group and not available to the public in general.
- There was concern about students using limited time and funding to earn multiple certificates within and between institutions without benefitting from educational progression that significantly expands career opportunities and wage increases.

The committee stated there is no intent to discourage or limit training needed by employers but to appropriately classify and characterize training as accredited and certificated programs or short-term training. Kim mentioned this discussion reflects the strategic plan initiative to define credentials and characteristics that help consistently classify different types of training offered by technical education institutions.

The committee made the following recommendations:

- Programs should encapsulate full employment requirements, except for programs like nursing that have robust partnerships between institutions with transparent graduation requirements and costs.
- Programs should represent broad occupational areas readily identifiable by employers and prospective students. The committee suggested the chief economist help define or verify these areas.
- The Commissioner's office should recommend clear definitions and characteristics of programs and short-term training:
  - Programs should be accredited, credit-bearing, and credential-granting with a minimum threshold length. There should be a consideration for any definitions from regulatory bodies, practices in other states, natural breaks, and implications of existing programs. Programs requiring state or national licensure or certification for employment in a specific occupational area should be included regardless of length. Programs should be targeted to a broad audience of potential students. Program training contributes to performance funding.
  - Short-term training should be mission-related and should not be accredited, lead to a credential, or be credit-bearing. Training should be designed to develop knowledge and skills needed through a single course in unregulated areas. Students enrolled in short-term training should generally have attained a basic level of education, training, or experience in the occupational area in which they are enrolled. Training may be targeted to the needs of specific employers or employer groups—and not for the public in general. Short-term training contributes to growth funding.

During the discussion on program length, the colleges expressed concern over workforce demand and the need of students to get quickly trained and employed. Vic Hockett discussed state initiatives to support short-term training with significant needs and the desire from employers to embed apprenticeship into programs so students can work while getting training.

### **Program Approval**

As defined in R401, institutions must submit program approval requests that meet credential criteria to the board of trustees using a USHE-defined program approval template and following the template instructions. The template and trustee approval must be submitted to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) as notification of the approval of new certificate programs. These items will be retained in an approved program database and will appear as an information item on the Utah Board of Higher Education agenda. Notification items do not require Board approval but may be examined to ensure they are congruent with the institution's mission.

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth reviewed and explained each section of the program approval request template with the committee. Several institution leaders spoke in favor of the template. There was no opposition to moving in this direction, but a request for peer review to be integrated into the process.

### **Completion Definition**

Completion, with regard to the USHE strategic plan, performance metrics, and other system-related data, reflects graduates. Historically, technical colleges used a different definition of completion, aligning with the definition used by the Council on Occupational Education (COE), the body that accredits technical colleges.

The COE definition of completion represents graduates and students who did not graduate but became employed in a field related to their program of study. To alleviate confusion and discrepancies, technical college leaders were asked not to promote COE completion data and instead to use USHE graduation data. In turn, USHE will use the term graduation to clarify the information reported to stakeholders.

### **UBHE Technical Education Committee Strategic Plan Initiatives**

The Commissioner's office did a deep dive into each strategic plan priority. The topic this month was "Completion." The goals are to increase the timely completion of degrees and awards by 3% in 5 years and to increase the timely completion of underrepresented students by 4% in 5 years. EDI implications of completion strategies have been defined.

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth reviewed the strategies and tactics and gave an update on each.

### **Recommendations**

This is information only; no action required.