



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

March 24, 2023

Technical Education Committee Report

During its meeting on February 17, 2023, the Technical Education Committee held discussions on the following topics:

Transition to Credit Status and Institutional Implementation

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth, President Brush, and President Wood updated the committee on the progress of this initiative. The Commissioner's office led a task force of college leaders who met with the accrediting body and U.S. Department of Education representatives. Information was written into a Credit Implementation Guide to inform those responsible for implementation, ensure consistency between institutions, and address questions.

Progress has been made in the following areas:

- Technical education has adjusted and continues to adjust its student scheduling systems.
- Completed applications to the accrediting body for every program they offer (over 300) and adjustments will be presented to the Board for approval.
- Changes were made to the primary student information system.
- Applications for Davis, Dixie, and Southwest Technical Colleges were submitted to the Council on Occupational Education (COE) for approval, which was granted last fall.
- Presidents and financial officers worked with the Commissioner and Russ Galt to develop required changes to tuition and fees.
- Southwest Technical College has approved their changes to tuition and fees with the implementation of transitioning to credit beginning last month.
- Remaining technical education institutions will request Board approval for changes to their tuition and fees next month.
- Davis and Dixie technical colleges already have accreditation approval and can begin implementation when the approval for tuition and fees is granted.
- The remaining institutions will begin implementation on July 1.

Each institution will implement program by program with a student teach-out period. New and returning students will be enrolled in credit-granting programs. Implementation is anticipated to be completed within the 18-month to 2-year period after approval. After the Board approves each program, applications

are sent to COE. When this process is complete, this initiative will fully transition from the Commissioner's office to the institutions for implementation.

Davis Technical College will offer 37 programs and service 7,000 students this year. They chartered a cross-divisional Clock-to-Credit Committee in January 2022 and developed an implementation plan. Soon they will finalize transcript testing and implementation.

Southwest Technical College has created a task force involving every department at the tech college. The transition to \$95 per credit tuition was approved. There are currently two credit-based programs with three more to follow shortly. They are also piloting a new hybrid program later this year.

Currently, technical education is constrained by federal financial aid regulations that do not allow asynchronous learning. When offering synchronized live instruction, there is a lack of flexibility. Moving to semester credit will allow asynchronous learning and use common credit currency making articulation and transfer easier.

Program Alignment

Seven programs were presented for alignment: one single institution program and six programs offered at multiple institutions.

The committee had questions regarding the difference between the Information Technology and Cybersecurity program and the Information Technology program. The former is focused on security, while the latter is a lower-level program for technical support. There was a discussion around the importance of naming conventions, as well as an explanation about where the names of these programs come from and how they are vetted before coming to the committee. The committee felt the focus should be ensuring students and industry understand a program and the difference between graduates. It was suggested that industry partners be consulted.

There was concern about the Web Business program crossing over to business entrepreneurship at other institutions. The intent of the program is for students to be able to start their e-business online. Board members expressed concern about whether this program fits within our role and mission.

The Board requested the committee address the naming conventions to clarify the occupational differences in the Information Technology Cybersecurity programs, and the Web Business program committee address how the program aligns with the technical education mission. The Collision Repair Technology, Medical Assistant, Medical Coding and Billing, and Pharmacy Technician (Entry-Level) proposals were accepted as meeting the initiative's intent.

Technical Education and Board Policy Alignment

The Office of the Commissioner has been working for several months to review all technical college policies against existing Board policies to recommend consolidation and/or rescission of policies where

necessary to ensure alignment between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. This project furthers the Board's Strategic Plan priority of System Unification.

The Office of the Commissioner has comprehensively reviewed the technical college and Board policies. It recommends that the Board rescind the following policies as the concepts they cover already exist in Board policy and/or have been superseded by statute: technical college policies 102, 110, 111, 111P, 112, and 113.

Nearly 40 technical college policies have been aligned thus far under this project, including many that have resulted in amendments to Board policy. After the policy rescissions listed above are approved, only four technical college policies will remain. The policy alignment is expected to be completed by July 2023.

This was an information item for the committee, as the approval lies with the executive committee.

The following topics were discussed under the Board strategic plan initiative of Affordability:

Tuition and Fees

Technical colleges have been working diligently to transition from clock-hours to credit-hours. The Technical Education Committee has been very involved in this process. As a part of this initiative, tuition will move from being charged based on a clock-hour rate to a credit-hour rate.

The various technical colleges will present credit-based tuition rates for Board review and action in the March 2023 Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) Board meeting. This move to a new credit-based tuition model is intended to be essentially revenue neutral. This is accomplished by reducing student fees to offset the increase in the tuition rate. Therefore, this initiative will continue to move forward and not be impacted by the freeze in tuition rates.

Student Aid

Cassidy Stortz gave the committee an overview of the five programs the Board of Higher Education administers for technical education students:

- [*Technical Education Scholarship*](#)
- [*Promise Program*](#)
- [*USHE Employee Scholarship*](#)
- [*Promise Partner Program*](#)
- *NASA Space Grant*

Transfer Credit and Credit for Prior Learning

The award of articulated credit and credit for prior learning benefits both high school and adult students. It expedites student time to completion and reduces the cost of tuition and fees by ensuring students do not have to duplicate coursework already completed or competencies attained through experience.

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth gave an overview of both articulated credit, credit for prior learning, and competency-based education. In FY2022, the eight technical colleges served over 32,000 students. Over 31% of those students are dually enrolled at a high school and technical college. Many of these students have already completed technical education courses at their high school.

Many adult learners who enroll in technical education programs have valuable industry experience in the program area. In cases where a student has learning experience gained outside of the classroom, technical colleges have policies and procedures to evaluate the student's knowledge and skills to validate the competencies defined in specific courses. In these cases, the college awards credit so students can focus their time and effort on areas that need development.

Committee/Leadership Discussion on Affordability

The institutions discussed how education could be more affordable to students. One institution found that by bundling all the federal financial aid, they could offer programs tuition-free for some students (students still needed to pay for fees). They found that engagement was high and retention went up. They saw an increase in female students, particularly in non-traditional programs. Many institutions are providing digital textbooks at no cost to students.

The committee agreed that it would be a good idea to consider partnering with the private sector to offset costs to keep student costs very low. There are great partnerships that offset financial burdens to students. We need to continue to let industry know the impact it has when they partner with technical colleges. It creates a lot of opportunities across the state. Industry needs to hear more about the return on investment. When an industry partner invests in a program, they often send guest lecturers. They engage with the students and can mentor those they will be hiring.

Recommendations

This is information only; no action required.