



UTAH SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION

# MEMORANDUM

May 18, 2023

## **Policy 315, *Designation of Service Regions***

### Policy R315, *Service Area Designations and Coordination of Office-Campus Courses and Programs*

defines which Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) institutions are responsible for providing various educational offerings to citizens in communities throughout the state. The geographic designations are intended to define where institutions may establish campuses, centers, and other physical locations and offer college options to secondary students. The policy needs to be updated to include technical colleges and clarify which institution fulfills particular needs within shared service regions.

Earlier this year, the Board designated a small task force comprised of Board Member Hope Eccles, Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth, and Associate Commissioner Julie Hartley to evaluate geographic service regions and recommend necessary policy updates. The task force looked specifically at how the System of Higher Education can ensure educational quality, equitable access, affordability, and efficient use of state resources to support state residents, communities, and industry. The task force was also concerned with addressing unnecessary duplication of programming offered by institutions in the same region and fostering collaborative rather than competitive relationships between educational partners.

In April, the task force presented its recommendations to the Academic Education and Technical Education Committees, which both voted to approve the recommendations and ask the Commissioner's Office to draft a policy update based upon the following:

- The guiding principle of using service regions to ensure delivery of high-quality educational experiences, accessibility to post-secondary educational opportunities throughout the state, responsiveness to local and state-wide needs, and the efficient and effective allocation of state resources.
- Designating the service regions by county and institutional role for which each institution is responsible for providing courses, programs of study, and award levels within which it is authorized to maintain a physical campus.
- Referencing right-of-first-refusal processes for Concurrent Enrollment (those processes are detailed in Policy R165) and contractual agreements between technical colleges.
- Setting principles for Board approval for expansion beyond an institution's service region and a preference for exceptions to service regions rather than institutional roles. The approval process for requesting an exception to a service region is outlined in Policy R401.
- Designating service regions by county to show designated institutions and role within the county.

- Requiring the Office of the Commissioner to maintain an inventory of exceptions to designated service areas.

The attached draft incorporates the recommendations from both the Academic Education and Technical Education committees. Note that the policy was updated based on existing institutional designations for service regions; the county-by-county grid included in the updated policy could be used to engage in detailed future conversations about whether all regions of the state have adequate access to higher education offerings.

The policy draft has been vetted with the Council of Presidents, chief instructional officers of technical colleges, and chief academic officers of degree-granting institutions. It was reviewed by the Academic Education Committee on May 12, with several other board members in attendance, which voted to forward it to the full Board for review and approval.

### **Commissioner's Recommendation**

The Commissioner recommends that the Board review and approve the attached draft of Policy R315. The Commissioner, the task force, and the Council of Presidents also recommend that the Board of Higher Education engage in future conversations to identify and address possible gaps in geographic access to higher education within the state.

### **Attachment**