



**Utah Board of Higher Education
Utah System of Higher Education
Thursday, March 21, 2024**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES**

Board Members Present

Amanda Covington, Chair
Steve Neeleman, Vice Chair
Javier Chávez Jr.
Jon Cox
Sharon Eubank
Danny Ipson
Tina Marriott
Rachel Prickett Passey
Aaron Skonnard
Cydni Tetro

Board Members Absent

Office of the Commissioner

Geoff Landward, Commissioner
Alison Adams, General Counsel and Board Secretary
Taylor Adams, Associate Commissioner of Student Affairs
Trisha Dugovic, Director of Communication
Brynn Fronk, Executive Assistant to the Utah Board of Higher Education
Russ Galt, Senior Assistant Commissioner for Tech Education Finance
Jared Haines, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner
Julie Hartley, Associate Commissioner of Academic Education
Vic Hockett, Associate Commissioner of Talent Ready Utah
Carrie Mayne, Chief Economist
Katie Mazzie, Director of Student-Centered Initiatives
Jefferson Moss, Associate Commissioner for Innovation, Commercialization and Economic Development
Hilary Renshaw, Associate General Counsel
Brian Shuppy, Senior Assistant Commissioner for Budget and Planning
Nate Talley, Deputy Commissioner and CFO
Melissa Van Hien, Office Manager / Executive Assistant to the Commissioner
Scott Wyatt, Senior Executive Director of Statewide Online Education
Kim Ziebarth, Associate Commissioner of Technical Education

Institutional Presidents Present

Mindy Benson, Southern Utah University
Darin Brush, Davis Technical College
Elizabeth Cantwell, Utah State University
Clay Christensen, Mountainland Technical College
Paul Hacking, Tooele Technical College
Denece Huftalin, Salt Lake Community College
Stacey McIff, Snow College
Brad Mortensen, Weber State University

Taylor Randall, University of Utah
Jordan Rushton, Dixie Technical College
Jim Taggart, Ogden-Weber Technical College
Astrid Tuminez, Utah Valley University
Aaron Weight, Uintah Basin Technical College
Courtney White, Utah Tech University (interim)
Brennan Wood, Southwest Technical College

Other Guests

Cathy Anderson, Chief Financial Officer, University of Utah
Dave Cowley, Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services, Utah State University
Amanda DeRito, Associate Vice President for Strategic Communications, Utah State University
John Kowalewski, Executive Director, Marketing & Communications, Weber State University
Robert Muir, Executive Director, Administrative Services, University of Utah
Chris Nelson, Chief University Relations Officer and Secretary to the University, University of Utah
Val Peterson, Vice President for Administration/Strategic Relations, Utah Valley University
Laura Snow, Senior Advisor, University of Utah

Chair Amanda Covington called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

Committee of the Whole

Board member Marriott made a motion to go into closed session for the purposes of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual; Board member Skonnard seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Closed Session

Vice Chair Neeleman moved to end closed session. Board member Tetro seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Committee of the Whole

Oath of Office

Brynn Fronk administered the Oath of Office to student Board member Rachel Prickett Passey. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Administrative Appointments

Chair Covington and Alison Adams reviewed the search process for the new commissioner. The Board members vocalized support for appointing Interim Commissioner Geoff Landward, highlighting his ability to work with the legislature, his collaboration with the Board and presidents, and the Board's accomplishments under Geoff's leadership. **Vice Chair Neeleman moved to appoint Geoff Landward as the Commissioner of Higher Education subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. Board member Skonnard seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

Commissioner Landward described the Secretary to the Board position to the Board members and recommended that the Board appoint Alison Adams as the new Secretary to the Board. **Board member Marriott moved to appoint Alison Adams as the Secretary to the Board, effective immediately. Board member Tetro seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

Utah Tech Interim President

Chair Covington announced that Courtney White had been appointed interim president at Utah Tech University. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Institutional Highlights

Institutional highlights were provided by Weber State University President Brad Mortensen, Ogden-Weber Tech President Jim Taggart, and Davis Tech President Darin Brush. Vice Chair Neeleman asked the presidents what assistance they needed from the Board. President Mortensen asked for help telling the story to help change the perception of higher education. President Brush shared they may submit a capital investment request to help with Davis Tech's growth. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

2024 Legislative Session Report

Commissioner Landward introduced the 2024 Legislative Session Report. He thanked the presidents for their work during the session. Katie Mazzie reviewed some of the major legislative issues from the session, including SB192, HB458, and SB226. Commissioner Landward highlighted the changes to presidential authority, and the presidents shared their thoughts about the changes at the request of the Board. Commissioner Landward addressed concerns that were detailed in SB 226. The presidents discussed ideas on what can be done to respond proactively to the bill's concerns. Nate Talley discussed some of the budget developments. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

DEI Update

Commissioner Landward reviewed the changes to DEI at institutions due to HB261. He explained two areas of concern: 1. Ensuring we're not engaging in prohibited discriminatory practices, and 2. Ensuring that all students have access to resources our institutions offer to help them succeed. The Commissioner will create a compliance team within the Commissioner's office. He informed the Board that the office is working on guidance that will be a helpful tool to ensure institutions are meeting the requirements of the law. There was a discussion among the presidents and Board members regarding the impacts on employees, the changes on campuses because of the legislation, and data points. The Board formed the Legislative Issues Taskforce consisting of President Randall, Board member Tetro, Board member Cox, Board member Prickett Passey, and Commissioner Landward. **Chair Covington moved the Board to direct the Office of the Commissioner to issue formal guidance on implementing HB261 and use that guidance as a standard by which the Commissioner will assess institutional compliance with the law. Board member Skonnard seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

Strategic Plan

Chair Covington noted that the Board will spend time updating the strategic plan at the next meeting. They asked the presidents for feedback on the current plan and where changes could and should be made, which the presidents provided. The Strategic Plan Task Force was created, consisting of Board members Skonnard, Neeleman, Prickett Passey, and an OCHE staff member. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Workforce Preparedness Study Update

Vic Hockett provided an update on the request for a proposal for the Workforce Preparedness Study. The study will conclude in October/November so action plans can be developed in preparation for the next legislative session. Vic invited the Board members and presidents to provide input on the RFP, to which some was given. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Admissions Task Force Update

Board member Tetro provided an update on the Admissions Task Force to the Board members. She explained that funding is needed to proceed to the next phase. The goal is to be ready for the next admissions cycle in the fall. President Mortensen talked about the resources that the money would be

used for. The Board members discussed the impact on the administration level, incorporating Spanish language, connections made from the K-12 side, and student access and engagement.

Board member Skonnard moved to fund this project, which would result in the development, design, and deployment of an online portal and guaranteed admissions form and process. This request is for up to \$450,000 in one-time funding and up to \$215,000 for annual ongoing funding.

- **Tier 2 Cost (including AI add-on): \$450,000 one-time and \$215,000 pursue ongoing from the legislature after initial development.**

Board member Eubank seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Community College Study Task Force Update

Taylor Adams introduced the Community College Study Task Force Update and turned the time over to President Huftalin. President Huftalin provided an update from the Community College Study Task Force. They have made progress and recommend the following:

1. Deprioritize a three-tier tuition structure
2. Adjust systemwide goals and performance funding policy
3. Address concurrent enrollment funding
4. Enforce roles and missions

President Huftalin asked if the Board would give them latitude to continue to come back with some concrete recommendations. Commissioner Landward pointed out that this study was initiated by legislation, and there is an obligation to respond to all the recommendations. Board member Tetro asked if it's possible to get a recommendation in the next quarter so it's woven into the precursor conversations for next year's session. Taylor responded in the affirmative. There was a discussion amongst the Board members and presidents about funding models. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Report from the Shortened Bachelor Degree Task Force

Board member Aaron Skonnard provided an update from the Shortened Bachelor Degree Task Force. The Task Force had three recommendations for the Board to consider:

1. Take time to study the issue while the three-year NWCCU pilots run and then decide how to allow shortened bachelor's degrees in policy to align with accreditor requirements;
2. Keep shortened degrees as exceptions to standard bachelor's degree structures and keep the approval level with the Board rather than institutional trustees;
3. Lower the credit limit for bachelor's degrees in Board Policy R401 and grant approval authority to institutional trustees.
 - a. Option 1: Lower the credit limit for all bachelor's degrees to 90 credits (not recommended by the task force)
 - b. Option 2: Create a new category of bachelor's degree, the Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS), with a 90-credit minimum (recommended by the task force if the Board decides to update the policy before the completion of the NWCCU pilots).

The Board members and presidents discussed recommendation three, option two. President Randall proposed a task force to study why people are not attending college. **Board member Tetro moved to update Board Policy R401 to add a new category of Bachelor of Applied Studies with a minimum requirement of 90 credits using the language provided in the memo. Board member Cox seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

Communications Group Strike Team Update

Trisha Dugovic and Chris Nelson provided an update from the Communications Group Strike Team. The goal of the strike team is to improve public perception of higher education. They identified the proposed

messaging framework: Affordability, Individual ROI, State ROI, Economic Impact, and Lifelong Learning. Once implementation begins, these thematic buckets will be customized and shared across the system. Trisha reviewed the implementation timeline and informed the Board of how the communications group would share messaging through the system within the new framework. The Board members and presidents discussed the proposed messaging and provided their input. This was an information item only; no action was taken.

Annual Report on Credit for Prior Learning at USHE Degree-Granting Institutions

Due to time restraints, this item will be moved to another Board meeting.

Program Review Processes

Per Chair Covington's request, this item will be presented to the Board Executive Committee and returned to the full Board at a future meeting.

Shared Services

Nate Talley introduced the Shared Services update. Jefferson Moss presented on the statewide innovation ecosystem. The goal is to work together alongside government and industry and focus on certain areas that are helping on the tech transfer side. Nate shared some of the funding secured. He reviewed the shared services opportunities within Title IX, Information Technology Services, Human Resources, Employee Health Insurance Benefits, Technical College Payroll, and other initiatives and opportunities to explore. **Vice Chair Neeleman moved to adopt the Commissioner's recommendations to direct the individuals, work groups, and Commissioner's office to take the steps outlined toward implementing shared services and to provide an update to the Board at its next meeting. Board member Cox seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

University of Utah – Series 2024A Revenue Bonds

Nate Talley introduced the University of Utah Series 2024A Revenue Bonds project. Rob Muir and Cathy Anderson presented the project to the Board members. Nate reminded the Board of the statutory procedures involved in the process. **Chair Covington moved to approve the proposed resolution for the University of Utah's General Revenue and Refunding Bonds Series 2024A. Board member Marriott seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.**

Consent Calendar

Board Member Tetro moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Board member Skonnard seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Board member Chavez Jr. moved to go into closed session for purposes of discussing the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of an individual; Board member Cox seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

Closed Session

Board member Cox moved to adjourn. Board member Tetro seconded the motion, and the Board members in attendance voted unanimously in favor. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Alison A. Adams, Secretary

Date Approved:

DRAFT