



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

June 6, 2024

Community College Study Update

In late 2022, the Utah System of Higher Education contracted with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to conduct a study, as directed by the Utah Legislature, "to analyze current community college-related educational services and identify long-term strategies that address Utahns' ability to access an affordable, accessible, and workforce-aligned postsecondary education."

The resulting project had three main deliverables, including a report on enrollment trends, a report on community college services delivered in Utah, and recommendations to more effectively provide community college services in Utah. NCHEMS completed and released the enrollment trends report in August 2023. Their final report, including recommendations, was released in October 2023 to the Utah Board of Higher Education and USHE presidents. Additionally, it was shared at the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee meeting on October 10, 2023, and NCHEMS presented its findings to the Board of Higher Education on December 1, 2023.

The Board established a task force to provide recommendations on prioritization to the Board. Members of the task force include President Astrid S. Tuminez (UVU), President Deneece G. Huftalin (SLCC), President James R. Taggart (OTECH), President Stacey Y. McIff (Snow College), Commissioner Geoff Landward, Chief Economist Carrie Mayne, and Associate Commissioner Taylor Adams. The task force has met four times to discuss and prioritize NCHEMS' recommendations. Task force members presented preliminary items in March 2024 and have finalized their review and recommendations.

A full list of prioritized recommendations and justifications can be found in the attachment. The task force recommends the Board discuss and consider action in the following areas: 1) Institutional Funding, 2) Missions and Roles, and 3) Student Affordability & Access.

1. **Institutional Funding:** NCHEMS offered multiple funding-related recommendations for institutions, the Board, and the Utah Legislature to consider. Notably, the task force suggests that the following NCHEMS recommendations may provide the most impact on institutional effectiveness and student support:

- Reevaluate performance metrics and funding to support part-time, low-income, first-generation students better. Increased funding resulting from revised metrics could be utilized to improve student support and scholarships. *Recommendations: Funding 1e & Funding 2a-c.*
- Review state funding for Concurrent Enrollment and recommend changes to better support institutional costs to deliver programming while addressing affordability for students. The task force additionally suggests a review that also reevaluates student tuition revenue for institutions. *Recommendation: Funding 1c.*
- For degree-granting institutions with a technical college role, provide increased flexibility in spending state funds to optimize effectiveness. *Recommendation: Funding 1a.*
- For technical colleges, the task force supports technical college presidents' recommendations to create a simplified formula-driven distribution of dedicated project funds to each technical college in a manner similar to that of degree-granting institutions. Additionally, the task force supports efforts by the Board and Commissioner's office to work with legislative leadership to increase the amount of funding in the dedicated capital projects fund for technical colleges. *Recommendation: Funding 3b.*

2. **Missions and Roles:** While institutions, the Commissioner's office, and the Board have engaged in regular discussions and actions related to this topic, NCHEMS formed multiple recommendations to build upon the existing work regarding roles and missions. The task force suggests that additional decision-making and enforcement is necessary and has provided a list below of the highest prioritized recommendations. If left unaddressed, the task force maintains that student outcomes could be negatively impacted by competition among institutions, exclusivity in rural education providers, and unneeded duplication. The task force suggests that the System:

- Enforce roles and missions of institutions. Recently approved and upcoming policy edits will provide necessary clarity in roles and missions. Continued work should include a program duplication analysis, expectations for major committees to participate in transfer discussions for student success, and the creation of enforcement protocol for missions, roles, and services regions. *Recommendation: Create Cost-Effective Delivery Models 1a-b.*
- Ensure that residents of the rural areas of Utah have reasonable access to the education and training opportunities relevant to their local economy. NCHEMS suggests, "With small populations and large distances to travel to many providers, rural spaces in Utah are especially prone to experiencing deficits in educational services. Yet it is in the interest of the state to correct for market failures of this nature." The task force agrees that appropriate goals and resources to address those benchmarks must be determined for access to higher education in rural Utah. A discussion regarding the mission and roles of rural-serving technical colleges, Snow College, Utah State University, and additional

USHE institutions that serve as partners remains critical to this recommendation.

Recommendations: Access 2c-2d and Create Cost Effective Delivery Models 1c & 2a.

- Create strategy and vision for non-credit programming. Multiple institutions engage in non-credit education, such as workforce training, continuing education, and community education. The Board could utilize market demand, community/regional needs, and roles and missions to distinguish allowable types of non-credit instruction, its funding sources, and data opportunities. *Recommendation: Access 1c, Funding 1b, and Data Collection & Analysis 5.*
3. **Student Affordability & Access:** NCHEMS recommends that regional universities adopt a three-tier tuition model to lower the cost of attendance for students in sub-baccalaureate programs. The task force maintains that presidents remain committed to addressing affordability at their institutions and have held costs low compared to their peers nationwide. There is both expressed interest and concern in piloting a lowered tuition rate at regional universities. The presidents will provide an update to the Board regarding discussions and impacts of this potential tuition reduction initiative.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Board listen to the task force's recommendations and decide what action is best.

Attachment

- Attachment 1 – Task Force Prioritization of NCHEMS Recommendations