

Task Force Prioritization of NCHEMS Recommendations

Access

Students' access to community college-level education and services varies by location within Utah, as well as across different population and demographic groups. Based on participation rates, the Utah System of Higher Education is doing a good job of providing access to concurrent enrollment across all areas of the state, including rural high schools. Its participation rates of students enrolling after high school are more mixed. In particular, students in the southeast and west-central parts of Utah are not enrolling in college at the same rates as the rest of the state, and enrollment among part-time, adult learners, and Pell-eligible students has declined. Additionally, USHE's dual-mission institutions are providing community college services unevenly, which affects student access to particular services depending on which of these institutions they happen to live near.

To ensure access to all community-college-level education and services for all students in all parts of the state, NCHEMS recommends that USHE:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Prioritization & Justification |
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| 1. Set baseline expectations for what each dual-mission institution should be doing in serving the community college mission, as current practices vary widely—variance that impacts access and student success. USHE should ensure that, at a minimum, each dual-mission institution will: | |
| a. Offer relevant AAS degrees in fields where they already offer bachelor's degrees (e.g., Nursing, Physical Therapy). | Low Priority There are only very specific programs that demonstrate positive outcomes and the need for AAS degrees. These degree types must be tied to licensure requirements or industry sectors where an AAS degree is required for the sector. Technical certificates can usually meet this need, and institutions have developed pathways to address this demand. Employer-demand is utilized to develop necessary AAS degrees at our institutions. |
| b. Maintain systems of developmental assessment, placement, and pedagogy that are based on best practices. | Completed These practices have been explored, addressed, and refined by dual-mission institutions. Additionally, some technical colleges offer developmental |

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| | assessment and coursework for students. Institutions can provide additional details to the Board if desired. |
| c. Offer non-credit instruction as needed by the communities they serve (e.g., ESL). Note: Non-credit workforce training should continue to be the purview of institutions with a technical college role. | High Priority 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. |
| d. Appropriately serve adult students by, for example, offering coursework and student services on evenings/weekends; designing services to meet the needs of adults (e.g., childcare support); and offering user-friendly Credit for Prior Learning options. | Ongoing Institutions engage in many initiatives related to adult learners. If performance funding changes, as addressed in recommendations in the funding category below, institutions could utilize added dollars to supplement layers of support that are necessary for adult learner success. Additionally, considerable work has taken place in credit for prior learning, and the Board will have the opportunity to review a prior learning report at the June Board meeting. |
| 2. Ensure that residents of the rural areas of Utah have reasonable access to the education and training opportunities relevant to their local economy. 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. This will require of USHE: | |
| a. Regular monitoring and assessment of local needs and enrollment demand, which must be sensitive to variations in economic conditions and populations throughout the state. | Ongoing Institutions work regularly with regional and statewide entities dedicated to workforce and economic development. Additionally, the Talent Ready Utah Board is the Talent, Education & Industry Alignment Subcommittee of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission. It addresses statewide workforce development by evaluating training and education programs and improving alignments to current and future workforce needs. The subcommittee works collectively to inform the |

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| | commission on policy and change implementation for improved education alignment to talent development. |
| b. Collaboration with other entities that are concerned with rural workforce and economic development, including the Utah Department of Workforce Services and other executive branch agencies, as well as local county government and concerned stakeholders. | Ongoing Institutions work regularly with regional and statewide entities dedicated to workforce and economic development. Additionally, the Talent Ready Utah Board is the Talent, Education & Industry Alignment Subcommittee of the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission. It addresses statewide workforce development by evaluating training and education programs and improving alignments to current and future workforce needs. The subcommittee works collectively to inform the commission on policy and change implementation for improved education alignment to talent development. |
| c. Particular attention to setting appropriate goals for rural access and the possible creation of related accountability mechanisms for the USHE institutions that bear the brunt of responsibility for delivering services to those places, particularly USU's statewide campuses and Snow College. | High Priority Appropriate goals must be determined for access to higher education in rural Utah, and resources must exist to accomplish benchmarks. 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. |
| d. Recognition that scale economies and efficiency are more difficult to attain in serving rural populations; USHE's resource allocation policies and accountability mechanisms should reflect this reality. The institutions serving students in these areas face unique issues that need to be recognized in the resource allocation process. For example, the provision of housing for both employees and students will likely be needed if students from remote regions are to be enrolled and if faculty are to be attracted to serve those students. | |

Affordability

Relying on dual-mission institutions to deliver community college services has meant that students attending those institutions are charged university-level tuition rates for these services. For many Utahns, there is no postsecondary education alternative that is priced similarly to most community colleges nationwide, relative to peers who enroll in exclusively bachelor's degree-granting institutions.

In light of this reality, NCHEMS recommends that USHE:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Prioritization & Justification |
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| <p>1. Adopt a three-tier tuition structure, much like that used by USU at its branch campuses in the southeastern part of the state.</p> | |
| <p>a. A CTE tuition rate. This tier does not represent a change from current practice; it applies to technical education certificate programs at technical colleges and degree-granting institutions with a technical college role.</p> | <p>Unknown</p> <p>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.</p> |
| <p>b. A community college tuition rate for degree credit courses at SLCC and Snow and for the first 65 credit hours of degree credit courses taught at the regional universities and all of the statewide campuses of Utah State.</p> | |
| <p>c. A university tuition rate for all undergraduate credit hours in degree credit courses in excess of 65 taught by the regional universities and USU's Statewide campuses, as well as all credits at the University of Utah and Utah State's Logan campus. For students enrolled in baccalaureate programs at</p> | |

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| <p>Snow, credit hours in excess of 65 credits should be charged at university tuition rates.</p> | |
| <p>2. Analyze the ways in which tuition waivers and the largest state aid program, the Opportunity Scholarship, are leveraged towards meeting the needs of students seeking community college services. The current Opportunity Scholarship does not, in practice, currently support first- and second-year students attending a community or technical college, and it is less frequently awarded to Pell-eligible and Latinx students. It is not known how waivers are applied to support students seeking community college-level education. Together with pricing reforms, financial aid reforms may provide the state with opportunities to target students who face affordability challenges to accessing postsecondary education.</p> | <p>Ongoing The Commissioner's office began analyzing the use of all state aid programs (not only the Opportunity Scholarship) and statutorily authorized tuition waivers at all USHE institutions in 2022. The Opportunity Scholarship is available for all qualified students at any degree-granting institution, including SLCC and Snow College. The Technical Education Scholarship is available for students attending technical colleges. The scholarships are available to all students who meet the eligibility requirements. Finally, each USHE institution, including Snow and SLCC, annually reports the use of the 18 tuition waivers authorized by statute.</p> |

Funding

To appropriately serve the community college mission in Utah, the state should recognize all parts of that mission within its higher education funding model. Additionally, there are some needs that currently appear to be underfunded, where the state could better serve students, citizens, and the economy by appropriating additional funds or doing so in a different way.

NCHEMS, therefore, makes the following recommendations for USHE and the state of Utah:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Prioritization & Justification |
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| <p>1. As noted above, NCHEMS' recommendation of a lower community college tuition rate will reduce revenue at Utah's dual-mission institutions. As a result, we recommend that USHE review the entirety of the model used to fund Utah's public postsecondary institutions—including base funding, growth funding, performance funding, capital funding, and other separate funding streams such as Custom Fit, Talent Ready Utah, etc.—and make adjustments to ensure that institutions have funding available to meet each of the state's expectations. The funding model should:</p> | |
| <p>a. Provide increased flexibility to institutions in spending state funds. Institutional leaders informed NCHEMS that because the state funds technical education and degree-granting education in separate line items, institutions that have both forms of programming in their mission are required to distinguish all revenue and expenditures associated with technical education from those associated with academic programming. Institutions may have interpreted this requirement in inconsistent ways (there are still issues being addressed from the 2020 merger of systems related to how the tech/degree-granting portions work in harmony towards shared goals), but at least one institution mandates its employees be identified based on which type of programming they provide. This practice creates barriers to institutional flexibility and responsiveness and imposes unnecessary administrative burdens. Reducing the number of separate "buckets" of funding that institutions must keep separate will simplify the</p> | <p>High Priority For degree-granting institutions with a technical college role, providing increased flexibility in spending state funds would optimize effectiveness.</p> |

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| <p>funding model and create flexibility for institutions to use funds where they are most needed. In some areas, more fungibility in funding may reduce the need for new money. As a matter of accountability and for the purposes of populating the funding formula, USHE should maintain reporting requirements on the outcomes and finances of these separate functions, but the funding streams need not be segregated. This is also true of tuition revenue that comes from technical or academic credit, which institutions should be able to use flexibly to serve students' needs without having to provide detailed accounting separately for funds used for technical or academic credit. This treatment may also require adjustments to the pricing plateau for full-time enrollment in ways that ensure students are not penalized for taking a mix of technical and academic credit.</p> | |
| <p>b. Align funding for colleges performing non-credit community college functions, especially short-term workforce training not funded by Custom Fit, ESL, and Adult Education, with the realities of the costs of performing those functions. Currently, non-credit activity at degree-granting institutions is treated as a self-supporting, fee-for-service venture. This is appropriate for some types of non-credit programming (such as personal enrichment or community education offerings), but it is generally not adequate for other programs that serve vulnerable populations and directly address Utah's workforce demands. It is possible that current funding levels, in total, are adequate to support workforce-relevant non-credit education and training. However, with limited exceptions, the size and scope of these activities are not currently recognized in the metrics used to set funding levels. Adult</p> | <p>High Priority</p> <p>There are multiple recommendations that address non-credit instruction. As such, the Board should create a 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.</p> |

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| <p>education specifically is not currently a USHE function and will need to be accompanied by appropriate levels of funding if it is brought under the USHE umbrella.</p> | |
| <p>c. Review the distribution of state funding devoted to supporting concurrent enrollment. Institutional leaders across the state agreed that their concurrent enrollment costs are not fully funded by the state. Further, institutions are prohibited from increasing tuition or fees for high school students, which are currently \$5 per credit at the degree-granting institutions and \$0 at the technical colleges. Larger USHE institutions with bigger overall budgets are able to absorb the unfunded costs of educating high school students more easily than smaller institutions are. If the State of Utah wants to continue to grow concurrent enrollment, especially among underserved populations, it will need to ensure that institutions can afford to continue carrying out this portion of their mission without having to dip into their discretionary resources.</p> | <p>High Priority The task force suggests USHE 1) review of state funding for concurrent enrollment and 2) recommend changes to better support institutional costs to deliver programming while addressing affordability for students. The task additionally suggests the review also reevaluates student tuition revenue for institutions.</p> |
| <p>d. Consider using funding as one means of incentivizing collaborations between institutions.</p> | <p>Low Priority Evidence suggests that institutions already collaborate without the need for incentives. The task force is aware of multiple partnerships between institutions to best support student success.</p> |
| <p>e. Provide institutions with equitable funding for students who need the most support to succeed in postsecondary education, such as first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, students who need additional support to demonstrate college-readiness, and other student populations historically underrepresented in USHE. A way of ensuring adequate funding for providing services to these</p> | <p>High Priority The task force considers this recommendation aligned with recommendation 2 below and recommends that the Board engage in conversation and action related to adjustment of metrics and performance funding to better support part-time, adult, first-generation, and low-income individuals.</p> |

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| <p>populations is to incorporate a factor or weight in the base funding model for the institutions.</p> | |
| <p>f. Invest in local economies by expanding funding for the Custom Fit program. Custom Fit is one of the primary mechanisms for responding to immediate workforce needs and, in the process, serving adults. During interviews with employers, NCHEMS staff consistently heard that Custom Fit was serving only a fraction of the needs in the employer community. Anything that can be done to increase this funding will benefit the provision of community college services offered by the technical education institutions and better serve the adult population that is so critical to the state's workforce development needs. USHE should also revisit the criteria used to approve Custom Fit applications to ensure that funds are made available to start-up, entrepreneurial companies as well as established companies. At an appropriate point, it would be useful to conduct a more focused evaluation of the Custom Fit program in order to more fully understand the impact it is having on employers, student participants, and local workforce needs, specifically to identify ways that its positive impact can be strengthened.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>There are already funding mechanisms to address custom fit funding and expansion through System request processes. This specific recommendation will be addressed in an upcoming funding proposal.</p> |
| <p>2. Adjust the performance funding policy in ways that balance current metrics with incentives that reward institutions for their enrollment and completion of part-time students, especially adult students enrolling in CTE programs. Utah's enrollment declines have been heaviest among the adult and part-time student populations, which will be crucial to meeting state goals. Perhaps not coincidentally, multiple institutional representatives noted that the "on-time completion" incentive built into the USHE performance funding model creates incentives to not enroll students who cannot possibly graduate in 150 percent of program time or to award shorter-term credentials that may or may not have workplace value. Performance funding does not make up the bulk of the state funding USHE institutions receive, but it is both an important way the institutions are able to secure new, ongoing funding and a powerful signal of what the state values. Timely completion and part-time enrollment and eventual completion are both worthy goals, therefore:</p> | |

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| <p>a. The on-time graduation incentive, as currently constructed, should be applied only to students who initially enroll as full-time students.</p> | <p>High Priority</p> <p>The task force considers this recommendation aligned with recommendation 1e above. It suggests that the Board engage in conversation and action related to adjustment of metrics and performance funding to better support part-time, adult, first-generation, and low-income individuals.</p> |
| <p>b. A separate on-time component should be developed for students who initially enroll as part-time students. For such students, "on-time" should be defined as being 300 percent of the program length.</p> | |
| <p>c. The legislature should adopt an additional metric to incentivize institutions to ensure that students make progress toward degree or credential completion. Such a metric should simply count the number of students who cross a threshold of 30 credit hours within an academic year, or who earn a workforce-relevant (industry-recognized) credential, regardless of when they started. Such a metric would be directly related to the state's interest in improving the number of educated Utahns in the workforce. It would also provide an earlier indicator of institutional performance in improving student success, thereby shortening the lag between when institutions make changes and when they are rewarded for resulting improvement. Finally, this measure would reduce the temptation to "game" the other metrics by manipulating the cohort used as the denominator, a practice that is not uncommon in response to performance funding models in other states.</p> | |

3. USHE and/or the state should develop a more responsive way to create needed capacity, especially at the technical colleges. As the low-cost point of entry into postsecondary education in Utah, every effort should be made to ensure that these institutions have sufficient capacity to meet demand in terms of facilities, staffing, and equipment. These needs are particularly acute for laboratories in programs that require specialized space (such as welding), where programs are being capped when space limits are exceeded, and where innovative scheduling no longer suffices as a way of matching demand to available capacity. Since these colleges are so heavily dependent on state funding to expand capacity, the state should take responsibility for ensuring the funds are available to create capacity in a timely fashion. There are several possible options for doing this:

a. Expanding Talent Ready Utah (TRU).
When institutions need to add capacity to meet workforce needs on a short timeline, legislative requests for funding take too long—often several years. Funding available through Talent Ready Utah gets to the institutions much more quickly, but the program is not large enough to meet all of the needs, and restrictions on using the dollars available on capital expenses limit institutions' ability to respond effectively.

Ongoing
Funding for Talent Ready Utah was increased for FY25. The task force supports Talent Ready Utah funding and institutional ability to submit requests based on pressing workforce demands unique to each region.

b. Adding dollars to the Technical College Capital Projects Fund. Although Utah's technical colleges appear to have some of the most attractive and up-to-date spaces relative to similar institutions in other states, limits on the Technical College Capital Fund remain a barrier to rapid-response program development. Currently, this fund is only large enough to contribute to a single non-dedicated project per year among all eight technical colleges, and no money is left over for any dedicated projects, even relatively inexpensive remodels. Freeing additional resources

High Priority
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 the process for degree-granting institutions. Additionally, the task force supports efforts by UBHE and OCHE to work with legislative leaders to increase the amount of funding in the dedicated capital projects fund for technical colleges.

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| <p>from this funding mechanism would allow the technical colleges to expand and start to address unmet demand for their programs.</p> | |
| <p>c. Expand or remove limits on the number of non-dedicated projects the Utah Board of Higher Education may request from the legislature each year. These limits (currently one project per year among the technical colleges and one project per year among the degree-granting institutions) may be artificially slowing enrollment and credential growth in Utah. Of course, facilities are expensive to build and maintain, so any increase in funding for new facilities should be accompanied by strong guidelines around when a new facility is warranted; the space utilization study currently being conducted under the Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) may help with this.</p> | <p>Low Priority</p> <p>The task force suggests increasing the amount of dedicated capital funding for technical colleges in 3b. However, in years where there is an excess of one-time revenue, with legislative leadership support, the Board should have the flexibility to prioritize and send more than one non-dedicated project forward.</p> |
| <p>d. Create a discretionary fund at USHE that can be expended to purchase equipment and remodel space to increase needed capacity in specific CTE programs. Framing the purpose of the funds as remodeling rather than construction would prompt institutions to identify underutilized space that can be repurposed. Construction of new space would still be approved and funded through existing processes.</p> | <p>Low Priority</p> <p>The task force prioritizes technical college capital development and improvement projects in 3b. When distributed to each technical college by formula, the institutions have the flexibility to use the funds towards capital improvements or capital development.</p> |

Create Cost-Effective Delivery Models

To increase the cost-effectiveness of the delivery of community college services in the state, it is recommended that USHE and the state of Utah:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Response & Justification |
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| <p>1. Add clarity to USHE's current Institutional Missions & Roles policy, and enforce the policy consistently, with the goal of reducing competition among institutions and removing unneeded duplication while maintaining student access.</p> | |
| <p>a. In general, regional universities should not offer technical certificates and should instead rely on their partner technical colleges wherever possible. This recommendation is aligned with USHE's recently updated Institutional Roles & Missions policy²⁰, its forthcoming new policy on certificates, and recently-begun efforts to implement those policy changes. This will ensure that technical certificate programs are not duplicated by institutions serving the same geographic area. This will also require that the transfer of relevant coursework between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions be as seamless as possible for students. The SW Tech/SUU arrangement may serve as the model for institutions in other parts of the state. Institutions operating in the same geographic space should implement this with students' success and experiences as the highest priority—institutions should make their facilities as freely available as possible to partnering institutions to limit the need for</p> | <p>High Priority</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The task force suggests that the System enforces roles and missions, ensures that residents of the rural areas of Utah have reasonable access to the education and training opportunities relevant to their local economy, and creates strategy and vision for non-credit programming.</p> |

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| <p>students to relocate themselves throughout the day or evening.</p> | |
| <p>b. To help ensure that the University of Utah maintains its character as a research university, USHE should make sure that, in UU's efforts to grow enrollments, it does not draw first- and second-year students away from institutions that focus their efforts to fill a community college role as part of their missions. A failure to maintain the distinctiveness of the University of Utah's character as a selective research university will dilute its ability to achieve its primary mission. In potentially attracting a greater share of Utahns to study as first- and second-year students in general education curricula is also unlikely to support affordability for students and may complicate the financial position of institutions that stand to lose students to the University of Utah.</p> | |
| <p>c. Clarify the roles of Utah State and Snow in serving rural Utah, which areas are they each expected to serve with what services, and how are they expected to collaborate to make sure that rural needs are met.</p> | |
| <p>2. Encourage collaborations that create efficiency and distribute access to educational programs where their availability would be limited otherwise:</p> | |
| <p>a. USHE should enhance incentives for institutions to share academic programs and coursework. There are already some compelling examples of this within the System, among which is</p> | <p>Low Priority Evidence suggests that institutions already collaborate without the need for incentives. The task force is aware of multiple partnerships</p> |

the wide-ranging agreement between SUU and SW Tech that gives students at either institution low-cost access to courses, programs, activities, and other resources. This groundbreaking arrangement has worked out for both institutions, supported by quantitative evidence as well as champions on each campus. It is possible, however, that it may be threatened by its own success, as the agreement must be annually renegotiated and if the burden of costs and perceived benefits shift too far in one direction. Sustained support from each institution's leadership cannot be assured, especially if there is turnover at either one. USHE can study the partnership agreement, identify threats to its sustainability, and offer suggestions (potentially such as remaking the arrangement through a master agreement with an indefinite term, which is subsequently implemented and administered by annually negotiated provisions, e.g., caps on participation, eligible beneficiaries.)

These arrangements are especially critical for providing access to programs in rural areas where the demand that exists is insufficient to justify the existence of an entire program. USHE's program approval policy requires that some new programs—those outside an institution's designated mission—must consider whether the program's goals can be achieved via a partnership with another USHE institution.²¹ USHE should also marry the exercise of such oversight with incentives to help institutions overcome the

between institutions to best support student success.

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| <p>natural barriers to collaboration across institutional boundaries. This especially applies to in-mission programs that do not require Board approval.</p> | |
| <p>b. Find ways for institutions to collaborate on online instruction, especially in general education, where the aggregation of services can help institutions produce better instructional products more efficiently. For example, USHE can coordinate a corps of instructional designers, online support services personnel, and even faculty across the System who are specialists in teaching and supporting highly effective online general education courses.</p> | <p>Do not prioritize Institutions are already effective at offering general education online. Presidents and the Commissioner's office do not agree with the instructional recommendation to centralize online general education coursework.</p> |

Improve Pathways to Community College Services for Both Recent High School Graduates and Adults

Improving community college services in the state extends beyond access to include providing services that promote student success. USHE can do several things to improve the pathways into and through institutions that provide community college services. In this vein, NCHEMS recommends that USHE:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Response & Justification |
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| <p>1. Take a leadership role in improving the delivery of developmental education. USHE should establish definitions of college-readiness and support institutions as they develop multiple measures to assess students' college-readiness. Currently, most USHE institutions rely on placement tests to determine whether students are ready to enter college-level courses. In several technical colleges, students are welcome to study and retake the tests multiple times, but they have few options to help them succeed. For students who are not college-ready in degree-granting institutions, it appears that common practice is to enroll students in pre-college level courses, mainly in math and English, which must be completed before they can</p> | <p>Ongoing Justification: USHE is committed to addressing developmental education and includes it as a priority in the completion of the strategic plan. Additionally, the Office of the Auditor General recently released a report detailing the academic proficiency of Utah's K12 students, highlighting the work being done at USBE to positively impact students' college readiness. USHE is willing to coordinate with USBE to review and update definitions of college readiness.</p> |

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| <p>start on their program. There is considerable evidence that assigning students to courses that must be successfully completed before college-level work can begin significantly reduces persistence and completion. Students who enter open admissions institutions may arrive without adequate preparation for college-level work, making it important to put in place the mechanisms to deal with this reality. This recommendation aligns with USHE's current strategic plan.</p> | |
| <p>2. Reopen discussions with USBE regarding the appropriate oversight agency for programs such as Adult Education (AE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and coursework that prepares adults for high school equivalency exams, such as the GED. At the current time, these programs fall within the purview of the State Board of Education, which commits its primary focus to students who are</p> | <p>Low Priority As described by NCHEMS, this responsibility is currently led by USBE. Additional conversations with USBE and lawmakers must occur before elevating the prioritization of this item.</p> |

not yet adults. While the programs in question deal with content at the pre-collegiate level, the audiences for the programs are adults. In this case, NCHEMS believes that policy leadership for these programs would be better housed in the agency responsible for the education of adults. Such an arrangement would put in one place the responsibility for developing the pathways for:

- a. Adults who may have completed the equivalent of high school but need to gain additional skills in English. This is particularly important for students interested in enrolling at SLCC, which teaches numerous sections of ESL courses without assistance from the state. There needs to be a more intentional pathway for these students into certificate or

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| <p style="text-align: center;">associate programs at that institution.</p> <p>b. English-speaking adult students who have not completed high school and are seeking to complete a workforce certification or degree. For any certification that requires a high school diploma as well as passing a certification exam/assessment that depends on the completion of a CTE program, the ability to acquire the high school diploma or GED is an important part of the pathway. Having both components provided by a single institution, especially one that caters to adults, is likely to provide a higher probability of success for these students and a clearer path to the workforce.</p> | |
| <p>3. Put intentionality into recruitment/retention efforts of students who are currently under-represented at USHE institutions, including adult students, Hispanic/Latinx students, and Native Americans. This may include statewide or regional marketing and other efforts to encourage a college-going culture.</p> <p>Additionally, there are a number of academic programs at USHE institutions, particularly its technical colleges, that are not graduating enough students to meet industry demand for employees. In some cases, these programs have capacity for additional students but are undersubscribed. USHE and/or the individual institutions should put additional, focused marketing and recruitment efforts towards these specific programs</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Institutions continue to participate in efforts related to recruitment and retention.</p> |

Completion and Workforce Relevance

Utah's technical colleges, community colleges, and dual-mission institutions offer a wide variety of certificates and associate's degrees intended to either prepare students for transfer or the workforce. To that end, it is important for USHE to ensure that all sub-baccalaureate awards have value towards one of those two goals. NCHEMS recommends that USHE:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Response & Justification |
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| <p>1. Create basic guidelines around what can be considered a technical education "certificate." Utah's technical colleges are generally consistent about what types of programs, in terms of length, rigor, job placement, and industry recognition, are eligible for a certificate. Certificates awarded by the degree-granting institutions, however, are not similarly consistent. We recommend that USHE establish a standard for all technical education certificates. A standard based on industry recognition is preferable to one based on the number of credits required. This will ensure that certificates have a standard meaning statewide that can be understood by employers.</p> <p>In addition, USHE's efforts to standardize a definition for academic certificates are worthy of recognition. Such a definition should focus on signifying that a student has reached a tangible milestone toward his or her degree, which ensures that the student's pathway to that degree is streamlined under state policy or has completed a coherent cluster of courses that conveys mastery of identifiable workforce-relevant skills and knowledge. In other words, an academic certificate that protects the validity of a completed course of general education studies that is uniformly</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>USHE is currently engaged in conversation and revisions to policies related to this recommendation.</p> |

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| <p>transferrable and creditable toward degree requirements would satisfy this condition.</p> | |
| <p>2. Ensure that all awarded associate's degrees have meaning and value for either transfer or the workforce. USHE recently undertook efforts to align associate's degrees with bachelor's programs in their top majors across the System to smooth transfer and reduce excess credit accumulation. Additionally, USHE should regularly evaluate and work to improve the outcomes of transfer-oriented associate's degree graduates. The goal should be to increase the number and percentage of these students who go on to enroll in a bachelor's degree program and ultimately complete a four-year degree. USHE should focus on both external (to another institution) and internal (with the same institution) pathways to bachelor's degree completion for associate's degree students.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>There has been emphasis on this topic at both the System and institutional levels. Major meetings and the Transfer Council have produced important content for this work and a continued level of creating consistency in transfer opportunities for all students. Additionally, the Office of Research and Data Science has completed Utah-specific research about transfer-oriented degrees.</p> |

Data Collection and Analysis

Through the course of this project, NCHEMS learned that there are some missing data elements that would be very valuable for USHE in understanding how institutions are contributing to the community college mission across Utah. We therefore recommend that USHE collect and analyze the following additional data:

| NCHEMS Recommendation | Task Force Response & Justification |
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| <p>1. Information on tuition waivers and any other aid missing from the USHE financial aid dataset. This will help USHE understand the full scope of aid going to each student, the amount each student is actually paying, and how each institution uses tuition waivers. While some waiver data are collected from institutions and included in memos or meeting minutes, integrating this information into the financial aid dataset would more effectively enable its analysis by connecting financial data to student data.</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>The Commissioner's office annually collects the usage of each of the 18 tuition waivers from all USHE institutions. USHE began analyzing and reporting on this data in 2022. The data team can work with the finance team to explore methods to share this information.</p> |
| <p>2. The low-income status of students at the technical colleges. This is currently tracked only for Perkins Grant reporting purposes but is useful for additional applications, especially understanding the extent to which low-income students are enrolling at Utah's technical colleges. NCHEMS does recognize that high-quality data may be difficult to obtain, as many technical college students do not complete the FAFSA due to participating in short-term programs that are not eligible for Pell Grants. Collecting and using what data there are will help improve data quality while providing for the possibility of building a better</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>When the recommendation was released, the Office of the Commissioner's data team committed to exploring options for gathering low-income status from technical college students.</p> |

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| <p>understanding of the impact of technical colleges on student outcomes.</p> | |
| <p>3. More up-to-date data on transfers between USHE institutions, and on the movement of students from K-12 to postsecondary institutions. NCHEMS' analysis relied on data from the UDRC, Utah's SLDS, which has the ability to track students across institutions in a way the USHE database cannot. As of September 2023, the most recent USHE enrollment data in the UDRC was from the 2019-20 academic year. Significant changes have taken place since then, most notably the global pandemic, and analyzing transfer in more recent years would be valuable. Tolerating that long of a lag in data limits USHE's ability, and its institutions, to connect policies and practices to desired outcomes. NCHEMS suggests that USHE either accelerate the schedule for adding its data to the UDRC or add cross-institutional tracking capabilities to its internal database.</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>Access to Utah Data and Research Center (UDRC) data was a temporary challenge due to the recent move of UDRC to USHE. Because of the transition of data from on-premises servers to the cloud, data collection was temporarily paused, which created this noted gap in the transfer of students. The technological connection has been reestablished, and UDRC will begin receiving updated datasets from the data partners next month.</p> |
| <p>4. The "home" location of both students and graduates, particularly at institutions with multiple campuses such as Snow College and USU. The lack of having this piece of information prevents analysts from isolating the ways in which specific campus locations are helping meet local needs. This may be as simple as requesting an additional variable in existing enrollment and graduation data submissions.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>While institutions may already engage in this level of data collection, the Office of the Commissioner's data team will work with institutions to identify a data collection solution.</p> |
| <p>5. Non-credit instruction. As noted above, there is currently no comprehensive</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |

statewide data on non-credit programming. We recommend that USHE collect data on class offerings, the number of participants, and certifications awarded. These should be classified so that enrollment can be separately measured for pre-college instruction, customized training for employers, workforce-oriented training that is not employer-specific, and community service. Worth noting is that few states currently maintain robust, high-quality data on non-credit activity, but there is a growing movement to capture and categorize these data, especially as the volume of non-credit activity seems to be growing.

Justification: The Office of the Commissioner's data team has started to address this problem and is preparing institutions for an initial collection of data. Additionally, USHE is looking for best practices nationwide and is participating in national conversations regarding this topic.