



March 6, 2025

Board of Trustees
Dixie Technical College

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Program Assessment

In accordance with Utah Code 53B-16-102(5)(b)(ii), this assessment is provided for the proposed Firefighter program, which the Dixie Technical College Board of Trustees will review for approval.

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) evaluates program proposals to ensure compliance with Utah Board of Higher Education policies and statutory requirements. This includes reviewing program alignment with institutional roles, service regions, credential definitions, program approval processes, and technical education standards. The assessment also incorporates peer review feedback into OCHE’s analysis and recommendation.

Program Assessment and Peer Review Feedback

The proposed Firefighter program aligns with Dixie Technical College’s mission to prepare students for technical occupations. The program meets workforce demand by training firefighters, a high-demand occupation in Utah. Statewide, there are approximately 230 projected annual openings, with Washington County transitioning from volunteer to full-time positions. The St. George Fire Department serves a growing population of over 95,000 residents, with additional staffing needs due to a new fire station opening in 2024.

Peer reviewers endorsed the program, highlighting its workforce relevance, industry partnerships, and alignment with state firefighter certification requirements. The program collaborates with the St. George Fire Department, Washington County Emergency Services, and surrounding agencies, ensuring hands-on training, internships, and job placement opportunities.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

The Firefighter program is recommended for Trustee approval.

Next Steps and Trustee Actions

The Board of Trustees will review this proposal and OCHE’s assessment to determine whether to approve, defer, or reject the program. If approved, Dixie Technical College will notify OCHE, and the program will be placed on the Utah Board of Higher Education’s consent agenda for final review.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding this report.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Landward, Commissioner of Higher Education
Utah System of Higher Education

Copy

Jordan Rushton, President

Camille Lyman, Chief Instructional Officer

Attachments

- OCHE Program Assessment and Commissioner's Recommendation, including Peer Review Summary and Feedback
- New Program Proposal



GENERAL REPORT

March 2025

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
Program Assessment

New Technical Education Program

Institution: Dixie Technical College

Program Title: Firefighter

Requested Credential: Technical Certificate (12 Credits/360 Clock Hours)

CIP Code: 43.0203

1. Policy Compliance Overview

Policy R312: Institutional Roles and Missions

The review confirmed that the firefighter program complies with the designated role, associated criteria, and alignment with the institution's mission. Specifically, Dixie Technical College's role includes offering technical certificates under R312-6.1 and Table 1, aligning with its mission to prepare students for technical occupations.

Policy R315: Designation of Service Regions

The review confirmed that the program will be offered within Dixie Technical College's designated service region, ensuring compliance with the policy and meeting its criteria.

Policy R401: Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs

Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs The review confirmed that the proposal complies with the processes outlined in R401-5.3 for program approval.

Policy R402: Certificate and Degree Award Structures

The review confirmed general compliance with the criteria defining the technical certificate.

Policy R403: Short-Term Training

Policy R403: Short-Term Training The review evaluated whether the training should be classified as short-term training intended for experienced workers maintaining or upgrading their skills to meet workforce needs. The program exceeds the criteria for short-term training and appropriately qualifies as a technical certificate.

Policy R404: Technical Education Program Alignment

The review evaluated alignment standards for program structure, foundational and supplemental coursework, distinctiveness, and unique occupational focus. It also assessed whether program

materials, including graduation requirements, course descriptions, and objectives, are clearly defined and consistent. The program complies with alignment standards.

2. Workforce and Economic Relevance

The program demonstrates alignment with workforce needs.

- **Market Demand:** Utah employs approximately 2,245 firefighters, with 230 projected annual openings statewide. Washington County has around 200 firefighters, with departments shifting from volunteer to full-time positions. The St. George Fire Department serves over 95,000 residents, with a new fire station opening in 2024.
- **Wages and Employment Outlook:** Entry-level salaries start at \$48,320 per year (\$23.23/hour), with potential earnings up to \$84,054. The median firefighter wage in Utah is \$39,540, while Washington County wages range from \$31,010 to \$58,950.
- **Partnerships:** The program collaborates with the St. George Fire Department, Washington County Emergency Services, and surrounding agencies to provide graduates with hands-on training, internships, and job placement opportunities.

3. Duplication of Programs

As part of the assessment, the potential duplication of the programs was reviewed per R312-5.3.1.3, with unnecessary duplication defined under R312-3.14. While institutions are encouraged to avoid duplication, particularly in alignment with designated roles and missions, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) is initiating a system-wide evaluation of program duplication.

The assessment found that the firefighter program is within the institutional role and does not duplicate other programs within its designated service region. Southwest Technical College, Davis Technical College, and Utah Valley University offer this program outside the Dixie geographic service region.

4. Institutional Capacity and Resources

- **Facilities and Equipment:** The program will utilize Dixie Technical College's training facilities, which include a fire simulation center, live-burn training tower, and specialized firefighting equipment. Local fire departments will provide additional support.
- **Faculty Qualifications:** The program will be staffed by instructors with extensive industry experience, including certified firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and fire captains with a minimum of five years of field experience. Faculty members hold relevant industry certifications and meet state instructional requirements for firefighter training.

5. Peer Review Feedback

Peer reviewers supported the program, noting its strong employer partnerships, alignment with state firefighter certification requirements, and hands-on training opportunities that meet industry standards.

Conclusion

The Firefighter program proposed by Dixie Technical College aligns with Utah Board of Higher Education policies. The program addresses workforce needs, provides higher education pathways, and utilizes existing institutional resources.

Recommendation for Approval

The program is recommended for Trustee approval.

Attachment

Program Proposal (including supporting documentation)

Prepared by

Kim Ziebarth, Associate Commissioner for Technical Education
Utah System of Higher Education

Utah System of Higher Education
Request for Approval of a New Technical Education Program

Part 1: Notification of Intent

Institution: Dixie Technical College

Program Title: Firefighter

Program Length: 12 Credits/360 Hours

Anticipated Implementation Date: August 2025

Institutional Role and Mission Alignment: Yes

USHE Aligned Program: Yes

Campus Location(s): Dixie Technical College Main Campus

Within Designated Service Region: Yes.

Credential Awarded: Technical Certificate

CIP Code: 43.0203

Part 2: Additional Program Information

Financial Aid Eligible: No

VA Eligibility: Yes

Delivery Method: Traditional (0% online)

Work-Based Activities Included: No

Apprenticeship: No

Programmatic Accrediting or Regulatory Body:

- Council on Occupational Education
- Utah Fire Service Certification Council (UFSCC)

Opportunities for Industry Licensure or Certification: Yes

- Firefighter I
- Firefighter II
- Hazardous Materials Awareness
- Hazardous Materials Operations

Admission Requirements

Students must be at least 18 years of age prior to completing the program and have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Students must have a valid CPR-BLS-Healthcare Provider certification and a valid driver's license and a good driving record.

Students must be in good physical condition with no serious medical problems that are not correctable, e.g, back, hearing, sight.

Students must not have severely limiting handicaps or psychological problems.

No criminal convictions other than minor traffic violations.

Program Eligibility

Students must be at least 18 years of age prior to completing the program and have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Schedule

The program will be scheduled as defined-entry, defined-exit with classes in the evenings from 6pm-9pm and Saturdays as needed.

Comparable Programs

Southwest Technical College - <https://stech.edu/programs/health/firefighter/>

Davis Technical College - <https://www.davistech.edu/programs/firefighter>

Collaboration

Dixie Technical College has actively collaborated with local fire departments and industry professionals to help ensure the proposed Firefighter program aligns with workforce needs. We have held multiple meetings with fire chiefs and department representatives to gather input on curriculum design, essential training components, and industry expectations. Additionally, we have sent out multiple surveys to collect feedback from fire service professionals, allowing us to tailor the program to address skill gaps and meet hiring requirements. These collaborative efforts have ensured that the program is developed with direct industry involvement, providing students with the most relevant and practical training for a successful career in firefighting.

Educational Partnerships

Dixie Technical College is establishing strong educational partnerships to create pathways for students interested in firefighting and emergency medical services. We are working closely with the Washington County School District to explore opportunities for

high school students to gain foundational knowledge and skills that align with our Firefighter program. While there may not be direct articulation agreements at this time, these collaborations will help create a seamless transition for students pursuing careers in fire service.

Additionally, we are coordinating with Utah Tech University to strengthen connections between firefighting and emergency medical training. Graduates of Utah Tech's Paramedic program would be excellent candidates for our Firefighter program, as many fire departments seek personnel with both firefighting and EMS certifications. Likewise, graduates of Dixie Technical College's Firefighter program could further their education by enrolling in Utah Tech's Paramedic program, enhancing their career prospects in fire and emergency medical services. These partnerships ensure that students have multiple avenues for professional growth and advancement within the industry.

Utah Tech Paramedic:

<https://catalog.utahtech.edu/programs/healthcare-diagnostics-and-therapeutics/paramedic-certificate/>

Market Demand/Need

Statewide Overview:

- **Occupational Title:** Firefighters
- **Statewide Employment:** Approximately 2,000 firefighters are employed across Utah.
- **Projected Growth:** The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 4% growth in firefighter employment from 2023 to 2033, aligning with the average growth rate for all occupations.

Regional Insights:

While specific data for the St. George area is limited, local developments indicate a growing demand for firefighting professionals:

- The St. George Fire Department serves over 95,000 residents across approximately 78 square miles and operates nine stations strategically located throughout the city.
sgcityutah.gov
- Construction of Fire Station 10 in Desert Canyons is underway, with completion anticipated in October 2024, suggesting an expansion in firefighting services.
sgcityutah.gov
- Local fire chiefs have been requesting that Dixie Tech offer this program for at least 5 years.

Given the statewide employment figures and local developments, there appears to be a sustained need for trained firefighters in Utah, including the St. George region. In the St. George area, the departments are transitioning from volunteer to full-time salaried firefighters. Establishing a firefighter training program at Dixie Technical College could address this demand, benefiting both the community and aspiring firefighting professionals.

DWS and BLS Data

Firefighter is a three-star job according to DWS. There is no specific DWS local data regarding demand, but statewide there are 2,245 positions with 2,693 positions projected in 10 years. 2% annual growth is projected, which is over five times the national average. There are projected to be 230 annual total openings. jobs.utah.gov BLS data indicates that there are approximately 200 firefighters in Washington County. bls.gov

Wage Potential

Based on available data, the wage potential for firefighters in the St. George, Utah area is as follows:

- **Firefighter I:** Starting salary of \$48,320 per year (\$23.23 per hour). careers.sgcityutah.gov
- **Firefighter II:** Starting salary of \$56,036 per year (\$26.94 per hour), with the opportunity to progress up to \$84,054/year careers.sgcityutah.gov

Regional Considerations:

- While specific data for the St. George region is limited, data indicates that firefighters in Utah have a median salary of \$39,540. [Career Explorer](https://careers.sgcityutah.gov)
- ZipRecruiter reports an average firefighter salary in Utah of \$54,264 per year (\$26.09 per hour) as of January 2025. ziprecruiter.com
- Indeed reports that the average firefighter earns \$68,643 per year. indeed.com
- According to DWS, the St. George Metro area has average starting wages of \$15.85 per hour, and average median wages of \$17.58 per hour for firefighters. jobs.utah.gov
- BLS data indicates that firefighters in the 10th percentile in Washington County earned \$31,010 per year in May 2023, and those in the 90th percentile earned \$58,950. The mean wage is \$42,510. bls.gov
- Washington County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country. The City of St. George is in the process of constructing a new station with plans for additional stations in the near future.

These figures suggest that firefighter pay is in the process of rapid transition as departments switch to full-time salaried employees and that beginning firefighters in the St. George area can expect starting salaries of \$23.23 per hour, with opportunities for advancement and higher earnings based on experience and position.

Facilities

Program Location and Facility Upgrades

The program will be taught at Dixie Technical College’s Main Campus. It is anticipated that the program will utilize an existing classroom as well as the Diesel Technology bays and unused acreage on the campus.

Construction and Relocation Plans

N/A

Estimated Costs and Funding Sources

Program Resources

Faculty

Status	#	Qualifications
Full-Time	1	Education: Bachelor’s Degree in Fire Science, Emergency Services, or related field (preferred).
Part-Time	2	Credentials: Instructor Certifications Firefighter I & II (NFPA or equivalent). EMT/Paramedic certification. HazMat Awareness/Operations certification. CPR/First Aid Instructor certification (optional). Experience: Minimum 7 years of active firefighting experience. Prior teaching or training experience in firefighting or emergency services (preferred). Experience in leadership roles (e.g., captain, lieutenant, training officer) preferred.

Expense Budget

Personnel (Faculty Salary and Benefits)	\$205,000
<i>Full-time Faculty (Salary + Benefits)</i>	\$130,000

<i>Part-Time Faculty (Salary + Benefits)</i>	\$75,000
Operating Expenses	\$115,000
<i>Equipment</i>	\$100,000
<i>Travel (conferences, professional development)</i>	\$3,000
<i>Resources (training materials, supplies)</i>	\$12,000
Other	\$
Local fire departments have committed to share equipment and resources	\$
Total Expenses	\$320,000

Funding

Internal Reallocation	\$
Appropriation	\$320,000
Special Legislative Appropriation	\$
Grants and Contracts	\$
Special Fees	\$
Total Funding	\$320,000

Student Program Cost

Postsecondary Tuition	\$1,260
Postsecondary Fees	\$500
Differential Tuition	\$
Secondary Fees and any additional costs	\$
Estimated cost of required materials	\$384
Additional costs - SCBA Fit Test and UFRA Testing	\$390

Revenue Generation

Projected Revenue	\$21,000
-------------------	----------

Part 3: Required Documentation

Graduation Requirements

Successful completion of the following courses and accompanying skills:

- Hazardous Materials Awareness
 - NFPA 470 (2022 edition), Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders
- Hazardous Materials Operations
 - NFPA 470 (2022 edition), Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders

- Firefighter I
 - NFPA 1001 (2019 edition), Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications, chapters 4
- Firefighter II
 - NFPA 1001 (2019 edition), Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications, chapters 5

Program Description and Objectives (from aligned program information)

Program Description

The Firefighter program provides adult students the opportunity to prepare for employment as firefighters. Highly skilled and trained firefighting professionals will instruct students through hands-on curriculum in structural firefighter skills, hazardous materials mitigation, and taking care of sick or injured patients. This program supports the mission to deliver competency-based, employer-guided careers, and hands-on technical education.

Firefighter is accredited by the Utah Fire Service Standards and Training Council (UFSCC). Students who complete all coursework can certify and obtain certifications in:

- Hazardous Materials Awareness
- Hazardous Materials Operations
- Firefighter I
- Firefighter II

Program Objectives:

- Suppress and mitigate fires.
- Reduce the impacts of hazards on people, property, and the environment.
- Recognize and treat medical emergencies.
- Serve communities and citizens in need.

Course Descriptions and Objectives (from aligned program information)

FOUNDATIONAL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Introduction to Fire 1 Credit/30 Clock-Hours

The Introduction to Fire course is an introduction to the complex, challenging, and unforgiving environments firefighters find themselves in every day. Safety is a primary concern throughout their entire career. The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives, which were created to ensure firefighters return home safely after every shift, will be covered.

Students will exercise together and must pass a physical fitness test at the conclusion of this course.

Course Objectives:

- Explain fire service history.
- Contrast between career versus volunteer positions.
- Evaluate and apply concepts of risk management and mitigation.

Firefighter 11 Credits/330 Clock-Hours

The firefighter course begins your career as a professional firefighter! A sample of the hands-on skills include the following: placing ground ladders, pulling hose, cutting ventilation holes, searching for victims, handling car fires, vehicle extrication, and live fire evolutions. These nationally-accredited certifications are recognized outside of Utah with many of our graduates working in other states.

Course Objectives:

- Identify a fire emergency.
- Demonstrate proper deployment of hoses and connection to water supply.
- Demonstrate effective fire suppression techniques.
- Determine offensive or defensive fire attack.
- Conduct, salvage, and overhaul.
- Demonstrate how to use the NFIRS (National Fire Incident Reporting System)

Occupational Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

- o Dixie Technical College - Firefighter OAC Meeting

Submission

Submit the completed form and required documentation to Kim Ziebarth at the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). OCHE will coordinate a peer review at an upcoming Chief Instructional Officer or Curriculum meeting, conduct a review for policy compliance, and return the review for inclusion with the Trustee program approval request.

Next Steps

1. Submit the Board of Trustees approval to Kim Ziebarth at the OCHE.
2. OCHE will place the approval on the consent agenda of the Board of Higher Education.
3. Submit approval and the policy to COE for final approval.
4. Once approved, provide accreditation documentation to confirm the new