



UTAH SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION

# MEMORANDUM

May 18, 2023

## Technical Education Committee Report

During its meeting on April 13, 2023, the Technical Education Committee held discussions on the following topics:

### **Technical Education and Board Policy Alignment**

The Office of the Commissioner has been working for several months to review all Technical College Policies against existing Board policies to recommend consolidation and rescission of policies where necessary to ensure alignment between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. This project furthers the Board's Strategic Plan priority of System Unification.

#### Policy R312, *Utah System of Higher Education and Institutional Missions and Roles*

A task force was created to evaluate institutional roles and missions and make policy recommendations that ensure the higher education system provides educational opportunities to meet the needs of Utah citizens and their communities by meeting industry and business needs. The intent is to ensure educational quality, equitable access, affordability, and efficiency to foster educational and economic growth through the responsible use of state resources. The work should address unnecessary duplication of programming offered by institutions in the same region, foster collaborative rather than competitive relationships between educational partners, and provide strong student transfer opportunities.

Committee members discussed the importance of collaborating with the presidents as this policy is modified. The presidents voiced support for the proposed definitions and the clarity they provide.

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

This policy defines institutional service areas by county, level, and type of instruction for Utah System of Higher Education institutions. The geographic designations specify where institutions may establish campuses, centers, and other physical locations and offer college options to secondary students. Policy updates are needed to clarify distinct service regions for degree-granting and technical education institutions. The policy defines criteria for exceptions, including the Right of First Refusal, contract training, and institution requests to the Board to offer training outside of a designated service region. The policy requires the Office of the Commissioner to maintain an inventory of training offered outside of designated geographic areas.

Utah Code prohibits technical colleges from offering instruction outside their assigned regions unless there is an agreement in place or an employer has specifically requested it. The statute defines regions for technical colleges. The institutions are responsible for providing programs consistent with the designated role and mission. All exceptions require Board approval. Fully online programs are exempt from service region designations.

Support was expressed to protect the integrity of service regions by requiring fully online programs to be submitted to the Board for approval as an exception.

The Committee moved to direct staff to revise policies R312 and R315 to incorporate the task force's recommendations and to bring the revised policies to the full Board for review.

It was noted that Policy R310, *System-wide Vision and Mission Statements*, also needed updating and was related to the two above. The Committee agreed for the Commissioner's office to look at possible revisions and to bring the suggestions to the Board.

Policy R401, *Approval of New Programs, Program Changes, Discontinued Programs, and Program Reports* and Policy 200, *Program/Course Approval and Reporting*

Policy R401 needs to be updated to clarify the distinction in credentials offered by academic and technical education institutions. The policy includes credential characteristics and approval and reporting requirements. Additionally, the policy defines other training types, including short-term, basic instruction, and community education.

The presidents were concerned about establishing minimum hours for programs. Several pointed out that technical college programs are developed to meet industry or employer needs. A discussion ensued on the difference between certificates and short-term training.

Program Approval Process

Institutions notify the Office of the Commissioner of their intent to implement a new program. The Office of the Commissioner informs the institution if a similar aligned program exists. If so, the program information is shared, and faculty are connected with the appropriate Technical Education Faculty Program Committee chair. If the program does not exist, other institutions will be notified to determine if a new Faculty Program Committee should be created.

The Committee moved to direct staff to revise policy R401 to incorporate the recommendations, grandfather existing programs that do not meet the proposed minimum program length, allow for exception requests to the Board, and present revised policies to the Board for review and approval. The Committee moved to direct staff to revise policy R401 to incorporate the recommendations and to bring the revised policies to the Board for review and approval.

## **Transition to Credit Status and Institutional Implementation**

Associate Commissioner Kim Ziebarth updated the Committee on the progress of this initiative. The Commissioner's office led a task force of college leaders who met with the accrediting body and U.S. Department of Education representatives. Information was written into a Credit Implementation Guide to inform those responsible for implementation, ensure consistency between institutions, and address questions.

Progress has been made in the following areas:

- Davis and Southwest Technical College have begun the implementation.
- Dixie has full approval for tuition and fees and can begin implementation at any time.
- Tuition and fees were approved for the remaining institutions.
- Applications to the accrediting body were submitted—or will be submitted for the remaining technical colleges the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April.
- The remaining institutions, including Salt Lake Community College, will begin implementation on July 1.
- Implementation will take place on a program-by-program and student-by-student basis.

Each institution will implement program by program with a student teach-out period. New and returning students will be enrolled in credit-granting programs. Implementation is anticipated to be completed within the 18-month to 2-year period after approval. After the Board approves each program for the transition, applications are sent to COE. When this process is complete, this initiative will fully transition from the Commissioner's office to the institutions for implementation.

Currently, technical education is constrained by federal financial aid regulations that do not allow asynchronous learning. When offering synchronized live instruction, there is a lack of flexibility. Transitioning to the semester credit will enable institutions to offer asynchronous learning and use common credit currency making articulation and transfer easier.

## **Program Alignment**

The following programs were presented for alignment under the Construction, Electronics and Robotics, Information Technology, Materials Inspection, Software and Web Development/Design, and Transportation employment sectors: Electrical Residential, Plumbing Residential, Electronics Technology, Electronics Assembly Technology, Robotics Technology, Information Technology, Networking and Cybersecurity, Non-destructive Inspection, Digital Design, Software Development, Web and Graphic Design, and Advanced Energy Transportation. All proposals were accepted as meeting the initiative's intent and have been placed on the consent calendar for the full Board.

## **Commissioner's Recommendation**

This is an information item only; no action is required.