



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

November 21, 2024

Higher Education Space Utilization – SmithGroup Analysis, 2024

The state Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) engaged the SmithGroup to conduct a comprehensive space utilization study of Utah's higher education institutions. This study aimed to assess and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of space usage within the state's public colleges and universities.

Scope of Work

SmithGroup's efforts focused on analyzing current space allocations, usage patterns, and overall facility needs to identify areas for potential optimization. The study includes an in-depth look at classroom and lab utilization, office space requirements, and common area functions to ensure alignment with educational and operational demands.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Continue to invest in centralized data collection and validation:** The Utah System of Higher Education should continue to work with institutions to review and refine room codes, definitions, and taxonomies to ensure that space utilization data is as robust and reliable as possible.
- 2. Maintain current utilization guidelines for degree-granting institution space needs analysis and planning, but convert to a single efficiency metric:** USHE should retain current Room Utilization Rate (RUR) and Seat Occupancy Rate (SOR) targets of 75% and 66.7% for degree-granting institutions. However, USHE should blend RUR and SOR into a single metric of classroom efficiency for ease and accuracy.
- 3. Convert current utilization guidelines for technical colleges to a capacity-based framework:** USHE should move away from RUR and SOR measures for technical colleges and instead apply capacity-based guidelines that contemplate assignable square feet per full-time equivalent student.

- 4. Expand types of space evaluated for utilization:** Most institutions have surplus space or are projected to have surplus space as projects currently in the pipeline come online. However, space deficits exist in multiple space categories at the institutional level.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only. The Commissioner will incorporate Board direction in the staff's review of the SmithGroup's recommendation and return to the Board with a proposal for operationalizing the findings where appropriate.

Attachment

Attachment 1 – SmithGroup Board Presentation