



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

February 17, 2023

Academic Education Committee Strategic Plan Responsibilities and Their Impact on Affordability

During its March 2023 meeting, the Board of Higher Education will be focusing its discussions on college affordability. Most of the Board's Strategic Plan responsibilities assigned to the Academic Education Committee are directly related to improving the timely completion of certificates and degrees. However, much of that work also has an impact on the cost of earning a credential. The following list identifies some of the primary strategies of the Academic Education Committee and how they relate to affordability.

Strategy: Structure degrees to facilitate transfer and completion

- How it helps with affordability:
 - Structuring degrees to facilitate completion helps students finish their degrees and enter their intended career more quickly (with associated financial benefits).
 - Streamlining transfer allows students to complete portions of their degrees at less expensive institutions before transferring to a more expensive institution if they choose.
 - Structuring degrees for transfer and completion saves students time and money by cutting out excessive credits on the way to graduation. The Utah System of Higher Education's (USHE) 2022 Excessive Credits study found that the average bachelor's degree recipient had 139 credits by the time they graduated which is at least one extra semester of tuition and fees (**around \$5000**).
- Major accomplishments to date:
 - Creation of the Board Transfer Council
 - Expansion of the electronic Utah Transfer Guide to help students explore their transfer options.
 - Shared General Education Core and Breadth requirements across the system.
 - Common course numbering system across all USHE degree-granting institutions to facilitate transfer.
 - Lower division alignment across 32 disciplines between all USHE degree-granting institutions.
- 2023 Deliverables:
 - Lower division alignment in the majors accounting for 75% of all graduations (lower division = the associate degree portion or the first half of a bachelor's degree).

- Streamlining General Education requirements to facilitate transfer and completion: update to Policy R470.

Strategy: Improve introductory course success.

- How it helps with affordability:
 - Getting students directly into college level coursework with built-in co-requisite supports rather than requiring them to go through remedial coursework saves them time and money. Students who need remediation before being allowed to enroll in college-level coursework will have to pay extra money for courses that will not fulfill graduation requirements and will take extra time to graduate.
 - Students who fail courses have lost time and tuition and will have to pay again when they retake the course.
 - Failing classes can lead to students losing Federal Financial Aid and other scholarship and grant funding for not making “satisfactory academic progress.”
- Key tactics:
 - Develop alternative placement standards to avoid unnecessarily placing students into remediation.
 - Provide students with options for fulfilling Quantitative Literacy (QL) requirements appropriate to their majors and intended careers so they have lower odds of failing by taking a math class that has a different focus from what they need (QL requirements are significant academic barriers to completion).
 - Use co-requisite remediation to help students access and pass college-level courses without requiring extra remedial coursework (and help them avoid the extra cost of remediation). For students who participate in co-requisite remediation, **estimated savings: \$1,225.**
 - Strategically use Concurrent Enrollment and other programs to address the misalignment between high school graduation requirements and college readiness curricula and to help students complete key gateway college courses.
 - The “DFWT” initiative tracking pass rates vs. the rates of students receiving Ds, Fs, Withdrawals, or Incompletes in key gateway courses (highest enrolling, lowest pass rate courses), disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, etc. in order to examine and eliminate equity gaps in course success.
- Major accomplishments to date:
 - Math Pathways Redesign to provide Quantitative Literacy options appropriate to a student’s major and career pathway rather than defaulting all students into a calculus track.
 - Development of co-requisite models for Quantitative Literacy (QL) courses.
 - Expanded access across the state to Concurrent Enrollment in key gateway courses. Concurrent Enrollment **Students saved \$77.7 million in tuition** in AY2022.

- Introduction of the Opportunity Scholarship to incentivize high school students' completion of key college gateway courses.
- SB196 grant funds helped 23 high school instructors earn graduate credits to help them qualify to teach Concurrent Enrollment Quantitative Literacy courses and increased the number of QL credits earned via Concurrent Enrollment from 38,500 to 40,447 since 2020.
- Aligned AP, IB, CLEP, and DSST exam scores with credits in specific, commonly numbered introductory courses so those credits can meet major and General Education requirements.
- 2% increase in the pass rates of key gateway courses. Estimated savings per student for not repeating one 3-credit course: **\$1400**.
- 2023 Deliverables:
 - Develop shared standards for multiple placement measures for English 1010, and Math 1030, 1040, and 1050 (via the Faculty Major Committees).
 - Expand co-requisite remediation in English 1010; work on developing a co-requisite option for English Language Learnings.
 - Create General Education Area Committees to design inclusive, equitable learning outcomes and pedagogical strategies in support of the effort to eliminate equity gaps in introductory course pass rates.
- 2025 Deliverable: Increase the number of under-represented students who complete QL requirements through Concurrent Enrollment via SB 196 grants to institutions.

Strategy: Standardize awarding of Credit for Prior Learning and ensure PLA aids in completion. See the attached Annual Report.

- How it helps with affordability:
 - By awarding students credit for learning they have acquired prior to enrolling in college, institutions alleviate the need for students to pay to take classes for skills and knowledge they have already gained.
 - Awarding credit for prior learning helps students move more quickly through their programs and gets them into the workforce and earning a salary.
- Key tactics:
 - Implement consistent practices for the award of articulated credit, including training of faculty and staff, and annual institutional reporting of articulated credit awarded.
 - Assess the impact of the award of articulated credit on student enrollment and completion.
- Major accomplishments to date:
 - Creation of USHE Policy R472, individual institutional PLA policies, a best practices guidebook, and a system-wide Prior Learning Committee.

- Determination of standardized minimum scores required to earn a determined number of credits and particular commonly numbered courses for national exams (AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, etc.).
- Implementation of annual institutional reporting of PLA credits and the number of students served, as required per state code.
- Provided systemwide training for institutional prior learning committees, faculty, and staff, co-hosted by USHE and UVU.
- Students **saved \$93,934,841.63 in tuition** through prior learning assessments in Academic Year 2022.
- 2023 Deliverable: Request for Proposals for vendors that can create a shared intake and assessment tool to help students identify where they may have prior learning that could earn them college credit; development of processes for shared portfolio assessments and faculty pools to conduct them on behalf of all degree-granting institutions.
- Partnering with Talent Ready Utah, industry partners, and faculty major committees to standardize the awarding of credits in commonly numbered courses for industry certifications and other work-based experiences.
- State law requires USHE degree-granting institutions to report annually to the Board on their efforts related to awarding credits for prior learning. The annual report is attached for the Committees review and will ultimately go to the full Board for approval.

Commissioner’s Recommendation:

The Commissioner recommends that the Committee review the Annual Report on “Credit for Prior Learning at USHE Degree-Granting Institutions during Academic Year 2021-2022” and forward it to the full Board.

Attachment: “Credit for Prior Learning at USHE Degree-Granting Institutions During Academic Year 2021-2022”