



UTAH SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION

# MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2023

## College and Career Pathways

A college and career pathway is a planned and structured sequence of academic and career-related experiences that help students prepare for their future careers while jump-starting their college education.<sup>1</sup>

These pathways typically involve a combination of coursework and experiential learning opportunities such as internships, externships, and career exploration activities. They may also include industry-recognized credentials and certifications, mentoring and advising support, and job placement assistance.<sup>2</sup>

College and career pathways provide a structured approach to help students prepare for their future careers while completing secondary and post-secondary education; according to the Career Ladders Project, well-designed pathways:<sup>3</sup>

1. Connect secondary and post-secondary academic learning with real-world career opportunities: Pathways provide students with opportunities to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-world career settings. This connection helps students understand the relevance of their education and how it relates to their future careers.
2. Provide a clear path to success: A college-career pathway provides a clear roadmap for students to follow that outlines the steps they need to take to achieve their career goals. This clear path will help students navigate the complexities of the educational system.
3. Reduce time to degree completion: By combining academic coursework with experiential learning opportunities and concurrent enrollment, pathways can help students complete their degree requirements more efficiently. This reduces the time and cost associated with earning a degree.
4. Address the skills gap: College-career pathways help address the skills gap that exists in many industries by aligning academic learning with real-world skills to provide employers with a pool of well-trained and job-ready candidates.
5. Increase employability: By providing students with industry-recognized credentials and certifications, college-career pathways increase their employability and help them stand out to potential employers.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nc3t.com/who-we-are/the-promise-of-career-connected-learning>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/NSFY\\_Indicator\\_Report\\_101819\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/NSFY_Indicator_Report_101819_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.careerladdersproject.org/>

## Utah's Commitment to Pathways

The Utah Board of Higher Education is committed to strengthening and developing educational pathways to increase students' access to and completion of higher education aligned to Utah's workforce. The following tactics guide the Office of the Commissioner in supporting this strategy:

- Lead cross-agency cooperation to create a shared goal and definition of educational pathways within Utah.
- Collaborate with USBE, USHE institutions, and OCHE units to lead and coordinate all college-in-high school programs and pathways containing post-secondary coursework or credentials.
- Develop a data collection and reporting framework to assess the quality of educational pathways within Utah.
- Train and support Utah's Regional Pathways Coordinators to develop and implement clear educational pathways from technical colleges to regional universities.
- Utilize Talent Ready Utah's connection to the workforce to align educational attainment with industry-validated occupations.

In addition to the Board's commitment, Governor Cox and Lieutenant Governor Henderson have prioritized work in pathways to bridge secondary and post-secondary education through their newly released Utah Home initiative.<sup>4</sup>

### Pathways Action Plan

Phase 1 of pathways work is committed to building a foundation and gathering information about pathways. In this phase, the Office of the Commissioner has led efforts to hire and onboard Regional Pathways Coordinators at degree-granting institutions across the state. These individuals will serve as experts for pathways work completed within their regions. They will create connections with local entities dedicated to pathways work and develop inventories of pathways programming within their respective regions.

In phase 2, the Office of the Commissioner will begin to collaborate and coordinate with stakeholders across Utah and throughout various systems of education. They will establish and maintain cross-agency relationships to assist in the convening of a Pathways Working Group, which will allow Utah to:

- Define pathways
- Develop a shared vision, mission, and goals for public education pathways
- Identify barriers and challenges to pathways
- Align college-in-high school opportunities in technical and academic education
- Create assessment tools to evaluate pathways through data framework
- Create an action plan for pathways in public secondary and post-secondary education

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<sup>4</sup> <https://governor.utah.gov/utah-home/>

The Office of the Commissioner will continue to provide regular updates to the Utah Board of Higher Education.

**Commissioner's Recommendation**

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