2021–22

USHE IMPACT REPORT

UTAH
SYSTEM OF
HIGHER
EDUCATION

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Vision and Mission

OUR VISION

The Board will ensure the System provides every Utahn—in every place and every circumstance—an affordable certificate or degree at a USHE institution that will meaningfully improve their lives through economic opportunity, civic engagement, and personal fulfillment.

OUR MISSION

The Utah Board of Higher Education governs and supports the Utah System of Higher Education to equitably provide accessible, valuable, innovative, and affordable higher education for students to expand their economic mobility, enhance their cultural awareness, and improve their overall quality of life.

Utah Board of Higher Education Members

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- Tanner Marcum, Degree-Granting Student Representative
- Valirie Serawop, Technical College Student Representative

COMMISSIONER

- Dave R. Woolstenhulme

Chair's Message

It is about this time every year that I'm reminded why we do this work—to serve our communities, students, and their families who have placed their trust in higher education to improve their lives and increase the opportunities available to them through obtaining a certificate or degree.

We have made bold commitments to improve, and we have made outstanding headway in the past year focusing our efforts where we can make the most impact. I believe that we can continue to deliver on our promises if we continue to be guided by our mission to equitably provide accessible, valuable, innovative, and affordable higher education for our students.

In the face of so many societal challenges, Utahns continue to see the value and return on investment a higher education can provide, and it is up to us to support them in the years to come. And by further prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion as a Board, we can better serve our ever-growing and diversifying population.

Of course, every accomplishment noted in this report would not be possible without the countless hours of time and support from our institutions' presidents, faculty, staff, and community partners to coordinate knowledge and resources to transform, improve, and reform higher education where necessary.

Please join me in continuing this important work that, when successful, has the power to make positive, lifelong transformations for students, their families, and society.

Lisa Michele Church

Statewide Impact

16 COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

8 Technical Colleges + **2** Research Universities + **4** Regional Universities + **2** Community Colleges

SERVING **215k⁺ Students**

60,530 Degrees & Certificates AWARDED IN 2021–22

27,352 Students Graduated WITH HIGH-YIELD AWARDS IN 2021–22

~**$38 million in scholarship funds were allocated or awarded, Helping 20k Students pay for college in FY 2022.**
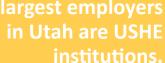
Graduates Saw a 59.3% Wage Increase one year after completing a technical college certificate

5 OF THE **Top 50** largest employers in Utah are USHE institutions.

The More Education Graduates Obtain, the higher their lifetime earnings.

Strategic Plan

The Utah Board of Higher Education formally adopted its strategic plan in May 2021 to guide its work in the combined Utah System of Higher Education for the next five years and to address Utah's statewide attainment goals. To develop the strategic plan, the Board and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education engaged in a rigorous, collaborative, and creative process that built on past initiatives from previous boards and incorporated feedback from institutions, state leaders, students, and other stakeholders.

In the year since that plan has been in place, several revisions have been proposed to ensure the plan stays nimble and current. In 2022, each Board committee considered changes to their assigned strategies and forwarded their recommendations to the full Board for consideration at the September 2022 meeting.

The Board adopted the changes to the strategic plan, and the Commissioner's office will tackle the tactics outlined under each priority of the plan over the next four years. The six priorities of the plan include system leadership, access, affordability, completion, research, and workforce alignment.

A Year of Accomplishments

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY IMPACT

Bridgerland Technical College

This year, NursingProcess.org ranked BTECH's Practical Nursing program number one out of 423 nursing programs in the western United States! Schools were ranked based on NCLEX-PN pass rates, academic quality, the school's reputation, and affordability. The college also officially broke ground for the Frederick Quinney Lawson Health Sciences Building. Many legislators, donors, architects, contractors, community members, and students who have participated in the process attended the groundbreaking in a show of support for the college. BTECH was honored to host Governor Cox and the Cache Valley Chamber of Commerce for a business luncheon in addition to local legislators and key business and community leaders. The Culinary Arts program prepared and served the meal showcasing their newfound skills. Additionally, the college recognized higher food insecurity for students amid rising grocery costs and created meal vouchers for certificate-seeking students and/or their families to use at BTECH Café or Meat Services.

Davis Technical College

Davis Technical College is committed to student success. Davis Tech graduates have an 86% placement rate, a 72% completion rate, and a 100% licensure rate. This year, the college partnered with the Hill Air Force Base 367th Training Support Squadron to create better materials and supplements to meet active-duty military United States Air Force training needs in Information Technology, Software Development, Cybersecurity, Web and Graphic Design, and Business Administrative Services programs. Davis Tech was also awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. Additionally, During the 2021-2022 academic year, the Davis Technical College Foundation awarded over $360,000 in scholarship funds.

Dixie Technical College

Dixie Technical College continued to emphasize student completion, with the graduation rate increasing to 84%. The number of graduates for the year was 680, a 24% increase from the prior year. Then-President Stephens spoke at the graduation ceremony shortly before her retirement after 10 years of outstanding service. Jordan Rushton, the former Vice President of Instruction, was selected by the Utah Board of Higher Education to succeed her and continue forward with the college's mission. During the year, Dixie Tech continued to grow rapidly, with program membership hours increasing another 10%. The technology and construction programs, in particular, were a source of growth for the college and the community. Upgrades to Building C began, which will triple the apprenticeship lab space in an effort to meet the incredible demand of the construction industry in this region. Dixie Tech continues to be dedicated to providing quality hands-on technical education to its students.

Mountainland Technical College

One word describes 2022 at Mountainland Technical College: historic. Not only did Mountainland graduate a record number of students who generated the largest membership hour count in Utah (1,539,778), but 99.2% of them earned their certificates without incurring debt. And because 'student success' means more than navigating coursework, the college enhanced support efforts around mental health, public safety, workforce development, and K-16 pathway engagement. Moreover, the school expanded its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion with new staff, facilities, and engagement strategies. The faculty and staff of Mountainland are especially thankful for the support of the Board of Higher Education and the State Legislature, without which our service expansion wouldn't be impossible.

Ogden-Weber Technical College

Ogden-Weber Technical College continued to grow in 2022, serving over 6,000 students in 30 hands-on programs in high-demand fields. The number of graduates also grew, with 1019 students completing their certificate programs. Thanks to generous donors and Utah's re-engagement program, the OTECH Foundation and Financial Aid Office provided more scholarships than any previous year. This is especially critical as the college is actively working to improve access for economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented students. OTECH faculty and staff work closely with local employer partners to ensure program curriculum matches industry needs, leading to a 93% job placement rate.

Salt Lake Community College

Salt Lake Community College's positive impact on lives this past year was evident as its Latinx/Hispanic student population grew to nearly one-fourth of its student population. Soon, SLCC will be a designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). SLCC's newly named Salt Lake Technical College tailored programs to reach and teach untapped pools of potential workers for Utah's tight labor market in 2021-22. With the construction of SLCC's new Herriman campus underway, Herriman residents will be able to take both SLCC and (upper-division) University of Utah courses in one place starting fall 2023, diminishing geographic challenges in accessing education.

Snow College

Snow College positively impacts individual lives, communities, and the state of Utah. Students are able to interact with Best of State award-winning faculty and staff who are committed to their success. The result is an impressive 71% of our students reaching their educational goals of graduation or transfer. Strong partnerships, including agreements with local industry and a $2.4 million grant from EDA to construct the Innovative Agricultural Building, support workforce training and entrepreneurship in central Utah. Snow College offers a high-value college experience as the state's most affordable option, allowing for greater access to all Utahns.

Southern Utah University

2022 was a monumental year for Southern Utah University. The institution commemorated its 125th anniversary and celebrated Mindy Benson's selection as the 17th President of SUU, the first female to serve in the role. Also, for the first time in its history, the university welcomed doctoral students to campus as part of SUU's Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.) program, the only Psy.D. program in the state of Utah. Along with these exciting "firsts", SUU experienced a 5.28% enrollment increase and now has more than 14,000 students in both on-campus and online programs. Over the past decade, SUU has been one of the fastest growing regional universities in the country, according to data released by the Chronicle of Higher Education. SUU also ranks second in the Western United States for students graduating with the least amount of debt. With an emphasis on increasing access and affordability and overall student success, SUU's retention and completion numbers remained strong, and efforts to improve student mental health and wellness were prioritized.

Southwest Technical College

In the last year, Southwest Technical College launched the Cedar City Business & Innovation Center, which serves as a business launch hub to give entrepreneurs access to guidance, mentorship, potential funding, a maker space, and more. It's a collaborative project with SUU and many other community partners that, within its first year, has hosted more than 40 business clients and welcomed five businesses into the first-ever 'Hive,' our business accelerator program. Southwest Tech also kicked off the Pharmacy Technician program and the Veterinary Assistant and Culinary programs. We also opened our Student Navigation Center—a relaxing, collaborative space for students with access to student services, including a food pantry, mental health resources, and job placement assistance. Southwest Tech was honored to receive the Cedar Chamber of Commerce's 'Innovative Business of the Year' award for the second time within the past four years. Along with that award, Rachel Stewart, one of Southwest Tech's EMS faculty, was presented with the 'Educator of the Year' award. We are excited to note that culinary arts alumni and former 'Student of the Year,' James Bowman, and his family were awarded 'Best Restaurant of the Year' for Bowman's Cowboy Kitchen.

Tooele Technical College

Tooele Technical College is proud to offer exceptional technical education to our community, where students learn a variety of skills that help them innovate, build, heal, create, lead, code, design, and inspire. Although our students come from diverse backgrounds, they all are working toward the same goal, which is to finish their technical education program and use their new skills to create a better future. Over the past five years, Tooele Technical College experienced a 101% growth in membership hours and a 41% increase in enrollment, which included a 188% increase in the growth in the number of secondary students. This year, $25 million in state funds were provided for Tooele Tech's expansion—making it possible to double its instructional space for existing programs and to start new programs to meet local workforce needs. Tooele Tech students also competed for the 1st time (in person) at SkillsUSA, where welding student Josie Jones won the state championship for her project. The work and efforts of Tooele Tech's student services leadership have resulted in the development of the first-ever Mental Health and Wellness Plan for improving student access and outcomes. Through the efforts of this plan, the college continues to develop access to resources within the college and community to address mental health, healthy choices, food security, and other potential barriers to student success.

Uintah Basin Technical College

UBTech students are well-trained and prepared for the workforce upon graduation. In FY2022, UBTech students set a college record for gold medalist winners at the SkillsUSA Utah Leadership and Skills Conference. As a result, UBTech sent 17 students to compete at the 2022 National SkillsUSA Conference. UBTech's SkillsUSA scholarship partner, Iowa Tanklines, generously covered the competing student's national competition travel expenses, allowing these fantastic students the opportunity of a lifetime. UBTech's Brooklyn Connelly was named a national SkillsUSA champion, earning the gold medal in First Aid/CPR, while Kristopher Morgan earned a silver medal in Diesel Technology. In other nationally sanctioned competitions, UBTech student, Davis Thomas, placed in the Top 3 at the American Welding Society U.S. Open Weld Trials in 2022, where he was crowned one of the nation's best welders. Graduate Ryan Birch, who continued his education to become a pharmacist stated, UBTech is where it all started. "I feel like UBTech is a great place for an alternative education pathway to find out what you want in life," he said. "UBTech offers so many ways for an individual to pursue pathways into the job force. Not just jobs in the Uintah Basin, but in the state and outside the state of Utah."

University of Utah

Over the past year, the University of Utah has rallied around President Taylor Randall's bold goal of becoming a top 10 university with unsurpassed societal impact. His strategy is threefold: inspire a new generation of learners by revolutionizing the student experience and increasing enrollment to 40,000; innovate life-changing discoveries with a goal of reaching $1 billion in research funding annually; and impact the lives of all 3.4 million Utahns. A signature project that embodies these goals is the U West Valley initiative, which includes plans to build a world-class hospital and outpatient care center and an academic campus with traditional educational pathways and workforce development programs.

Utah State University

As a national leader in research and graduate-level education, USU became one of just 146 institutions in the U.S., and the second university in Utah, to attain the Carnegie R1 Classification for "very high research activity." Contributing to this research activity is a record-breaking 10-year contract for up to $1 billion awarded by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory to the USU Space Dynamics Lab. USU's new Janet Quinney Lawson Institute for Land, Water, and Air now connects the institution's research programs with state, county, and city decision-makers to provide evidence-based data on critical issues. In March 2022, the Utah Legislature voted to approve and fund a new College of Veterinary Medicine at USU, a four-year Ph.D. program that will be the first in the state and both serve Utah's agricultural economy and help solve a severe shortage of veterinarians throughout the West.

Utah Tech University

Utah Tech University continues to prepare students to meet regional workforce demands by offering hands-on learning in more than 250 academic programs. In fact, all Utah Tech students participate in applied learning at an affordable cost, with 96% of students being offered scholarships, grants, or other financial aid this past year. Preparing the future workforce, Utah Tech granted more than 2,600 degrees this year; 91% of bachelor's and master's graduates were employed, attending grad school, or serving in the military within six months of graduating. Serving its community as a hub of innovation and entrepreneurism, Utah Tech University's Atwood Innovation Plaza submitted 40 patents and 33 trademarks this past academic year alone.
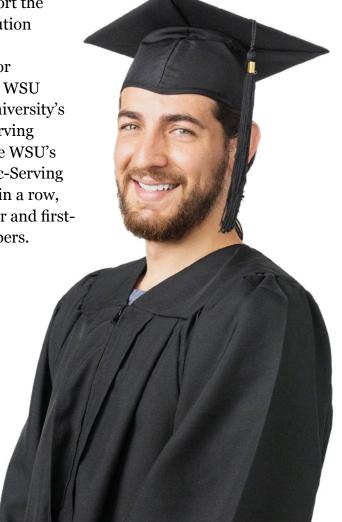
Utah Valley University

Innovation, growth, and progress marked Utah Valley University's 2021-22 academic year. Enrollment hit 43,099, and a record-breaking 15,351 degrees and certificates were awarded at graduation. Utah Community Credit Union gifted $28.5 million to UVU, the largest single gift in school history, which in part will be used to build a new state-of-the-art soccer stadium. The Innovation Academy opened, making it possible for students and faculty to work with industry leaders and companies to solve real-world problems. Leaders and experts from around the world converged on campus to attend the China Challenge Summit, a conference created by UVU and World Trade Center Utah to address U.S.–China relations.

Weber State University

Weber State continues to be a leader in the state by supporting northern Utah's aerospace and defense innovation ecosystem, growing the number of graduates in engineering and computer science, and opening two new facilities: the new Miller Advanced Research & Solutions Center at Falcon Hill, and the Noorda Engineering, Applied Science & Technology Building. WSU also secured $20M in state funding for a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility and launched a master's degree in systems engineering. Weber State has also attracted international recognition for its pioneering work in digital fluency for all students as an ADOBE Creative Campus. In January 2022, Weber State created the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to better support the university's efforts to become an institution where income, race, or ethnicity do not impact a student's access to programs or success in their educational endeavors. WSU also hired Yudi Lewis to serve as the university's first executive director for Hispanic-Serving Institution Initiatives, who will advance WSU's goal of becoming an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution by 2025. For the third year in a row, WSU has had record-breaking first-year and first-time student fall-to-fall retention numbers.
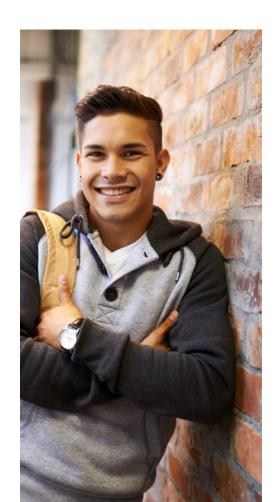
One System Impact

MISSIONS & ROLES

Program Duplication

Shortly after the merger of the state's two higher education systems in 2020, the Commissioner's office created an inventory of certificates and associate degrees offered across the System to identify potential program duplication between institutions within the same geographic service regions. The presidents of the degree-granting institutions and the technical colleges evaluated the inventory for their region, identified programs they saw as duplicative, and determined which institution should offer the program. In addition to the presidents' initial collaboration, the Commissioner's office has been conducting a deeper evaluation of programs in that inventory to see whether those that appear to be duplicates are duplicates in name only or if they duplicate a significant number of courses or graduation requirements.

The Commissioner's office determined that 47 technical certificate programs of the 506 total certificates offered across the System were offered at both a degree-granting and a technical education institution. The Commissioner's office is now working with presidents to determine which institution is the best fit for the programs when considering institutional roles.

Technical Program Alignment

This year, program faculty committees were implemented for technical education programs. The Commissioner's office developed a system and associated resources to support aligning program structure across technical and degree-granting institutions within USHE. All of the program committees were oriented, and their work is well underway. Aligning courses for statewide consistency and transferability and increasing and streamlining

program pathways will ensure students receive credit for coursework they've already completed, which can reduce their college costs and time to completion, regardless of the institution they attend. Program alignment includes adjusting program and course names, lengths, and objectives in the same occupational areas, including in regulated programs, and developing and maintaining articulation agreements between technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. Of the 80 identified programs to align systemwide, 49 have been presented and submitted to legislative and Board leadership.

As part of this initiative, faculty from nursing programs at all 16 USHE institutions have been working closely with the Commissioner's office to align the curriculum from BSN to ASN and from ASN to LPN and CNA programs in order to make it easier for students to transfer, advance in their careers, and meet critical workforce needs.

Technical College Transition from Clock Hours to Credit Hours

A credit transition policy, R474, was developed and implemented to define expectations for the approval of programs considered for the transition to credit. A credit implementation guide was also developed for institutions to ensure consistency and compliance with the transition to credit. To make the necessary changes, all technical college programs were transitioned to defined-exit scheduling, institutions worked with their Student Information System development teams, and changes were submitted through the appropriate accrediting body. This transition will lead to better program alignment and course transfer systemwide, helping students graduate on time while removing the need to take excess courses and reducing their education costs.

STRUCTURING FOR COMPLETION

It is critical that the Board, Commissioner's office, and institutions work together to give students every possibility to complete their degrees within a reasonable time. This involves such innovations as structuring degree programs to facilitate completion, streamlining transfer, awarding meaningful credit to students for prior learning outside of school, and addressing gaps in completion rates for underserved students.

Introductory Course Success

USHE data show that students who fail even one course have 20% lower graduation rates than students who do not fail. The Introductory Course Success initiative was adopted to address key 'gateway' General Education courses that have the highest enrollments and highest failure rates in order to help as many students pass as possible and eliminate the course success gaps by race and ethnicity. The initiative relies on disaggregated data to identify courses that fail some groups of students at higher rates than others. That information is shared with faculty working groups to facilitate the development and coordination of co-requisite remediation and other student success initiatives to better support student learning and completion without hurting academic rigor. Since implementation, it has already led to a 2% increase in pass rates in targeted gateway courses.

Concurrent Enrollment

The Concurrent Enrollment program is another key tool in the Introductory Course Success Initiative. It allows advanced high school students the opportunity to enroll in college courses for only $5 per credit, saving them time and money on their way to graduation. CE courses are carefully selected to help students meet General Education or Career and Technical Education requirements and credits earned through CE transfer to any USHE degree-granting institution.

Because General Education math courses are among those gateway introductory courses with high enrollments and high failure rates, USHE's Math Competency Initiative is designed to help students complete their math requirement while still in high school. Legislative funding provides support. The first phase of this multi-year funding was dedicated to helping USHE institutions work with local public school partners to increase the number of high school instructors qualified to serve as adjunct college math faculty. The second phase helped USHE institutions increase offerings of CE math courses within their service regions. To date, those efforts have doubled the Qualitative Literacy credits earned through Concurrent Enrollment. A new third phase began this year to address equity gaps in CE math participation. It supports institutional efforts to actively recruit and support underrepresented students in CE math classes, particularly low-income students and Black, Lantinx, Polynesian/Pacific Islander, Asian, and Indigenous students.

The Concurrent Enrollment Dual Language Bridge program allows students who have participated in Dual Language Immersion programs to bridge the gap from the end of high school coursework in 9th grade to upper-division college credits in the language. Students can meet the requirements for language certificates at some USHE institutions and are only two to three classes away from a minor after completing the program. In the 2021-22 academic year, 2,729 students benefited from the Bridge program.

Transfer
About one-third of USHE students will transfer at some point in their college journey. The Commissioner's office and faculty major committees have developed lower-division major maps that will allow students to transfer efficiently between USHE degree-granting institutions. After completing the first two years of an agreed-upon major map, students can transfer to any participating USHE university and complete a bachelor's degree on time (i.e., with only 60-62 additional credits). Although the goal for this year was to identify one major to pilot the concept of a shared lower-division major map, that goal has been far exceeded. To date, 21 disciplines have accepted the challenge and identified joint lower-division majors that work across the System.

The disciplines, some with multiple majors under their umbrella, are:

- Anthropology
- Biology
- Biochemistry
- Environmental Chemistry
- General Chemistry
- Professional Chemistry
- Mandarin
- Civil Engineering
- Criminal Justice
- Early Childhood Education
- Electrical Engineering
- French
- German
- History
- Japanese
- Political Science
- Portuguese
- Psychology
- Russian
- Sociology
- Spanish

The Board also wants to ensure that all credit counts toward completion. In addition to the policies that ensure all credits transfer within the System, all USHE degree-granting institutions share General Education requirements and utilize the established common course numbering system. This past year, the Commissioner's office and the General Education Task Force identified and addressed 147 instances where courses may have drifted from shared GE categories or course numbering. The Board will be strengthening the policy on shared General Education requirements between USHE institutions, based on recommendations from the Board Transfer Council and the General Education Task Force, in order to address some discrepancies that have arisen between institutions.

To help students understand their transfer options, the System and the institutions have worked together to create an online Utah Transfer Guide. Students can upload their transcripts and explore bachelor's degree options from across the System through the Transfer Guide (utahtransferguide.org). Students can also access links to institutional transfer advisors. High school students, advisors, and parents can also access information about the credits they can receive for Prior Learning Assessments such as AP, CLEP, DSST, and IB exams via the Transfer Guide.

Credit for Prior Learning

To ensure that students receive usable credit for national standardized assessments of prior learning, the Commissioner's office and faculty major committees standardized the minimum scores needed to earn credits in commonly numbered courses. This includes agreements on:

- 39 AP exams
- 38 CLEP exams
- 30 DSST exams
- 31 IB exams

This systemwide standardization will ensure students are receiving comparable credits for prior learning regardless of which USHE institution they attend and will save students time and money on the path to their degree, as having credit equivalencies to recognize courses will help them fulfill General Education and major requirements. The System's Prior Learning Committee is working jointly to develop a shared process for students to similarly earn credits for commonly numbered courses through faculty assessments of portfolios or other samples of their work. With UVU as a host, the Prior Learning Committee and the Commissioner's office also organized a systemwide professional development and training conference and updated the System's Prior Learning Assessment Handbook this year.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Board of Higher Education awarded or allocated scholarship funds to institutions to support nearly 20,000 students in FY 2022. Almost 60% of all scholarships awarded were needs-based and intended to reduce barriers for first-generation and underserved student populations or industry-specific scholarships. A needs-based Promise Partner pilot program that included matching funds from industry partners for 19 students and the inaugural USHE Employee Scholarship (129 students) are included in this total. Almost two-thirds of Promise Partner scholarships and nearly half of USHE employee scholarships were earned by first-generation students.

The Commissioner's office worked with the Legislature to streamline multiple merit-based state scholarships into the Opportunity Scholarship. Additionally, the Board of Higher Education forgave approximately $3.1 million in incentive loans for teachers after the Legislature changed the T.H. Bell Incentive Loan Program into the T.H. Bell Grant Program.

DATA

UDRC

USHE welcomed the Utah Data Research Center (UDRC.USHE.edu) to the Commissioner's office this year to align data resources and inform Board initiatives and higher education policy following the 2022 legislative session. UDRC is a statewide longitudinal database housing historical data from USHE, the Department of Workforce Services, the Utah State Board of Education, and the Department of Health and Human Services. Data are linked using a sophisticated matching algorithm and used to conduct robust analyses to support the examination of policy and programs.

During the transition of staff, technology, and resources from DWS to USHE, UDRC staff successfully completed the migration of the database to a cloud infrastructure and published research on the outcomes of low-income students who transition from the K-12 system to higher education. UDRC staff worked with USBE to complete the requirements of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant from the Department of Education that initially funded the creation of what is now known as the UDRC system.

In the coming year, UDRC will focus on new research requests from data partners, fully operationalizing the researcher database, and expanding data sources within the UDRC data warehouse. UDRC also plans to integrate at least one new data source—the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) data that was requested by the Governor's Early Childhood Commission—with the aim of informing research and policymaking in the early childhood education realm.

CollegeIsUtah CAMPAIGN

The statewide CollegeIsUtah campaign launched this year to advocate and build awareness among Utahns about higher education's value and return on investment, especially among adults and those from underrepresented populations. It also aims to address misconceptions and barriers to higher education. Since launching, the campaign has delivered 93 million impressions bringing Utahns across the state positive campaign messaging. More than one thousand potential students have reached out to our College Navigator for help with the college process. CollegeIsUtah is an integrated marketing campaign implemented across multiple digital, print, and broadcast channels to share promotional and educational material. An essential component of the campaign is community outreach and engagement. The campaign is the first statewide marketing effort highlighting all 16 public colleges and universities in the state.

Access, Equity and Belonging

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The USHE Equity Lens Framework remains a living and fluid document that is continuously updated to reflect emerging equity research and supports systemwide initiatives, including Learn & Work, the simplified admissions initiative, basic needs and mental health, General Education policy revision, transfer, Concurrent Enrollment efforts, and more.

Additionally, institutions integrated the Equity Lens Framework into their missions and strategic plans this year which drove conversations on closing attainments gaps and creating equitable opportunity for students, staff, and faculty.

In 2022, Utah State University hired and welcomed Dr. Jane Irungu as the institution's inaugural Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Simultaneously, the University of Utah expanded its EDI division with the appointment of Emma E. Houston as Assistant Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. Mountainland Technical College also created a dedicated position with the appointment of Lynn Adams as Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Title IX Coordinator.

Other institutional Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion highlights:

- Adrienne Andrews, Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer at Weber State University, has used the USHE Equity Lens Framework to guide institutional strategic planning efforts. Adrienne works in collaboration with Davis Technical College and Ogden-Weber Technical College to provide shared EDI services regionally.
- Maria Caballero, Disability and Diversity Coordinator at Davis Technical College, has helped to ensure the USHE Equity Lens Framework is tied to institutional strategic goals and business planning. With the support of the president, she has also created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee that meets monthly to recognize and celebrate cultural holidays and is in the process of conducting an internal audit focused on systematic diversity transformation.
- Dr. Juone Kadiri, Vice President for Institutional Equity, Inclusion, and Transformation at Salt Lake Community College, is leading and engaging the entire campus on the creation of the SLCC Equity Compass guided by the USHE Equity Lens Framework. Brenda Santoyo, Dream Center Manager, and Peter Moosman, Gender & Sexuality Student Resource Coordinator at SLCC, have served as chairs for USHE's LGBTQ & Dreamer Coalition and continue to lead the state on efforts that impact LGBTQ and undocumented students.

- Fernando Montano, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Snow College, chaired and hosted a virtual event for Expect the Great in March 2022. His student-centered leadership continues to remove barriers to student success at Snow College and inspire his colleagues across the state.
- Jenalee Moyneir, Chief Diversity Officer & Completion Coordinator at Uintah Basin Technical College, championed the creation of an inclusion center that opened its doors in the fall of 2022. The inclusion center is available to all students and provides a food pantry and mental health counseling; it is also a connection hub to external community resources.

- Daneka Souberbielle, Chief Diversity Officer and Associate Provost for Equity & Inclusion at Southern Utah University, created Equity Framework dimensions and tailored the Equity Lens Framework for SUU.
- Dr. Tasha Toy, Assistant Vice President for Campus Diversity and Chief Diversity Officer at Utah Tech University, worked in collaboration with President Williams and Latinx and undocumented advocates to lead out on implementing USHE's guidance on helping Dreamers and other students find financial aid. Dr. Toy serves as Vice Chair of the USHE Chief Diversity Officer network and continues to support the development of emerging Diversity Officers across the state through her leadership and mentorship.

The Board initiated systemic change by asking the Commissioner's office to review all policies, practices, and procedures with a focus on equitable outcomes for students, staff, and faculty. During the last year, the Board and Commissioner's office partnered with the University of Utah's New Leadership academy to receive access to a shared equity leadership curriculum. Additionally, the Board passed a resolution to affirm and support USHE's LGBTQ+ community with tangible action items collectively overseen by institutional LGBTQ+ program directors, coordinators, and advocates. The Board also formalized a charter that structures governance and measured outcomes for Expect the Great, a longstanding state college and career readiness program for Black, African, and African American students. USHE guidance was also provided to institutions on interpreting laws and policies associated with awarding institutional scholarships and financial aid to Dreamers and other students and simplifying institutional HB-144 practices. None of this work would be possible without the continued collaboration with many students, staff, and faculty across USHE's 16 institutions.

UTAH COLLEGE ADVISING CORPS

The Utah College Advising Corps program provides partner high schools with an adviser who has recently graduated college to support high school seniors—especially those who are first-generation, economically disadvantaged, racially minoritized, or otherwise underserved by the educational system—with higher education exploration and planning, admissions applications, financial aid and scholarships, and a meaningful connection to the receiving institution. The UCAC program grew nearly fourfold in a single year, from 13 college advisers serving 13 high schools in five school districts in 2020-21 to 48 advisers serving 51 high schools in 21 school districts in 2021-22. In the 2021-22 academic year, UCAC advisers had one-on-one postsecondary planning meetings with 14,969 high school seniors. The program reached 41% of Utah's graduating class this year, with further growth anticipated for the 2022-23 school year. Overall, the program's goal is to increase the number of Utah students that enroll in higher education, in addition to increasing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates.

STATEWIDE COLLEGE ACCESS TRAINING

The Commissioner's office provided college access training and resources to 450 school counselors, college access advisers, and college access partners this past year. Topics included Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) support, state scholarships, Concurrent Enrollment, technical education in high school, higher education pathways, and Keys to Success. The Commissioner's office replaced the USHE Conference for School Counselors and Administrators with a regular webinar series titled Ed Insights: K12 Edition. This efficiency—resulting in a 90% reduction in costs—has been an effective way to reach more school counselors across the state.

UTAH COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

In October 2021 and 2022, Governor Spencer Cox declared October as Utah College Application and Financial Aid Awareness Month. Utah College Application Week, coordinated statewide by the Commissioner's office, provides students in partner high schools the opportunity to apply to college during the school day with the support of school counselors, parents, and other volunteers. As there are significant enrollment gaps between racially minoritized and white students—up to 40%—as well as between students experiencing economic disadvantage and those not experiencing economic disadvantage, UCAW particularly focuses on supporting underserved students through the college application process. During the 2021-22 school year, 134 high schools participated in UCAW, representing 84% of the high school graduating class.

The 2021-22 school year was the first year purposefully integrating Keys to Success with the UCAW program. The Success in Education Foundation oversees the Keys to Success mobile app, which provides account holders a gamified way to search through scholarships and college readiness resources and includes incentives and prizes for completing tasks. The Commissioner's office partnered with Keys to Success to develop a college application checklist, embedded in the app, that provided students with an interactive way to navigate through the college selection process. This resulted in the creation of 5,218 new accounts in October 2021. Recent data gathered from Utah students identified information about applying to college as a significant barrier to their postsecondary achievement.

Workforce Impact

TALENT READY UTAH

Talent Ready Utah was welcomed to the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education this year following the 2022 legislative session after being previously housed within the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity. Talent Ready Utah works within the Commissioner's office along with workforce partners, education, and state agencies to align secondary and postsecondary education to industry demands to help build and maintain a well-trained and educated workforce.

The Talent Ready Utah team supports education and industry partnerships while providing students with increased career and education opportunities. To date, 7,418 students have been served by Learn & Work In Utah, a program that offers short-term educational training tuition free. Other Talent Ready programs, including Utah Works, have served more than 400 students; the Talent Ready Connection Grant, apprenticeships, and the work-based learning expansion initiative have further served more than 700 students. The Return-to-Work Initiative aims to serve even more Utah students in partnership with private industry partners, and proposals are currently being accepted. Talent Ready Utah is heavily involved in creating industry-led programs with the Utah State Board of Education, offering students meaningful work-based learning opportunities connected to high-quality, in-demand career opportunities.

K-12 Talent Ready Utah work-based learning pathway programs include partnerships targeting Aerospace Manufacturing, Technology Sales, Healthcare, Construction & Building Trades, Diesel Technology, Aviation Technicians and Pilots, and Financial Services. Additionally, Talent Ready Utah administers the Utah Adopt-A-School program, an initiative of Governor Cox to increase student access to opportunity through the development of industry-education partnerships. Utah Adopt-A-School partners businesses with schools where resources align to areas of need and goals, providing valuable resources, time, and mentoring opportunities to support educators' and students' success.

CUSTOM FIT

As a state investment in Utah's economic vitality, Custom Fit helps attract, expand, and retain companies in Utah and keep them competitive by training their incumbent workforces for specific employer needs. During FY2022, USHE's eleven technical education institutions provided 10% more Custom Fit training to 22% more companies than the previous year—for 437,006 hours of training, 20,177 employees, and 1,894 companies. Companies contributing an average of 62% of training costs added $4,951,715 to the state's appropriation of $5,010,800.

INNOVATION DISTRICT AT THE POINT

As identified in The Point Framework Plan, the Innovation District at The Point will serve as an ecosystem that advances technological innovation, fosters a startup environment, and facilitates meaningful relationships among universities, businesses, and entrepreneurs. It will nurture new ideas from the research stage through to commercialization, with the goal of helping to solve Utah's unique challenges.

Over the past six months, we have been moving aggressively to create a vision, scope, and plan for the Innovation District at The Point. This has involved a three-pronged approach. The first effort was to assess current higher education assets, which included meeting

and touring every Utah university and college to learn of the efforts around innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech commercialization. We also conducted an assessment of each college around targeted technologies to better understand current programs and the depth of research that currently exists. We created 'strike teams' from each college made up of a lead and a team that we plan to meet with regularly. We also created a committee made up of the commercialization members from each college. Finally, we're in the process of creating a group made up of entrepreneurship programs across higher education and accelerators around the state to deepen those partnerships.

For the second prong, we conducted site visits to better understand what best practices exist within the best innovation districts in the world. Along with Keith Marmer and Paul Corson, who lead Pivot at the University of Utah, we visited San Antonio, St. Louis, Israel, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, San Francisco, Boston, North Carolina, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Leuven, Belgium. Among the many things we learned from these visits, several key takeaways stood out from them all. The first is that placemaking is critical: the Innovation District needs to be at the heart of the project and a place where people want to live, work, and play. The second is that workforce is critical: In the most successful Innovation Districts, talent is the top priority. The third is that collaboration doesn't just happen: Everyone is building an "Innovation District." You can have all the right ingredients, but that doesn't ensure success. Stakeholders need to be fully engaged and mutually aligned (industry, higher education, policymakers).

The third prong was creating an Innovation Visioning Committee, made up of leaders in venture capital, entrepreneurship, associations representing different geographic areas and demographics, and representatives of higher education. This group is helping set the direction of the Innovation District, including identifying opportunities and challenges, economic development and sector potential, industry and workforce alignment needs, and go-to-market strategy. The goal is to have this group finalize this phase of their work by mid-December.

Looking Forward

The Board's Strategic Plan and the USHE Equity Lens Framework will continue to guide System and institutional efforts over the next year.
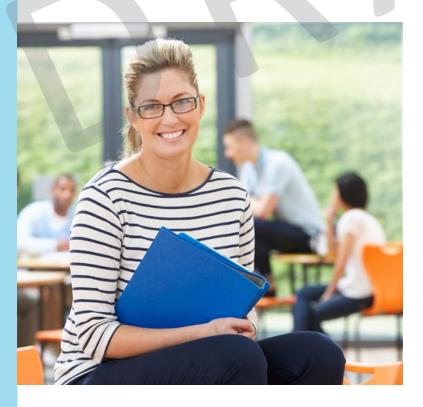
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

In the next year, Board committees will continue to examine all initiatives and proposals with an eye to closing attainment gaps existing across underrepresented student populations outlined in the Board's strategic plan. In 2018, people of color made up 23%-25% of the 18-35 age population in Utah. By 2065, it is projected that the percentage of people of color in this age range will nearly double, making up 39-41% of the population. Yet, when comparing Utah college enrollment numbers of Utahns in the same age group, enrollment rates of people of color are as much as 40% below that of white individuals. As noted in its issue brief on the Opportunity Gap, the Utah System of Higher Education recognizes if intentional and significant changes are not made to address structural barriers that create persistent and growing disparities, the enrollment and completion gap at Utah's colleges and universities will continue to increase, and Utah communities will continue to be negatively impacted. Accordingly, the Board and Commissioner's staff are reviewing all System policies to propose revisions that will help close attainment gaps and create equitable opportunities for students, staff, and faculty.

USHE's partnership with the New Leadership Academy will continue to provide tailored, culturally responsive, equity, and inclusion professional development for institutional leaders—further supporting a cultural shift in the higher education leadership landscape. The partnership will also ensure System leaders have a shared understanding that every student has the ability to learn and that they possess an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure optimal learning and workplace environments exist for all students, staff, and faculty.

Through the Simplified Admissions Task Force and in partnership with Institutional Research and Chief Diversity Officer expertise, USHE will work to develop a practical plan for collecting System and institutional demographic and sociocultural data that will support being better informed on key metrics tied to the Board's strategic plan.

COMMITTEE WORK

ACADEMIC EDUCATION

Institutional Roles and Missions and Academic Program Approval and Review Processes
In the next year, the committee will vet updates to policies R312 and R315, which define the roles of USHE institutions and their geographic services regions. Those policies currently do not include technical colleges and have not yet clearly distinguished between degree-granting and technical institutions. Similarly, Policy R401, which outlines the types of awards and credentials that can be offered by institutional role, will need to be updated to reflect those changes.

The Commissioner's office is proposing updates to Policy R411 to implement more consequential cyclical reviews of programs that have been approved by Boards of Trustees in order to ensure that institutions are appropriately meeting standards of academic quality and regional or state workforce needs. Policy R485 on Faculty Workloads will be updated in tandem with policies on institutional roles and will also be strengthened to reflect the Board's emphasis on teaching practices that support completion.

Structuring Degrees for Completion

The Board will continue its work with the Commissioner's office and institutions to give students every possibility to complete their degrees within a reasonable time.

The Board will be updating Policy R470 to incorporate recommendations from the Board Transfer Council and the Board's General Education Task Force to alleviate existing discrepancies in General Education categories across degree-granting institutions. A new policy, R472, will codify standards and principles of transfer stemming from recommendations from the Board Transfer Council.

- **Credit for Prior Learning.** Institutions will work to develop a shared, system-level intake and assessment process to help students identify their options for earning credit for prior learning.

- **Transfer.** We anticipate the creation of lower-division transfer maps in 10 additional disciplines, the development of a reverse credit transfer process to allow students to complete an associate degree after transferring to a four-year institution, the implementation of a system-level transfer appeals process, and updates to General Education Policy R470 to facilitate transfer.

FINANCE & FACILITIES

The Finance & Facilities Committee will enhance affordability through initiatives that improve fiscal transparency and understanding, coordinate and optimize financial aid, and ensure institutions' fiscal health and operational efficiency.

In September 2022, the Board launched its Shared Services Initiative, which seeks to find system efficiencies through regional collaboration. Each institution was given the assignment to review the proposals in the Huron Study and partner with nearby institutions to find ways to work together on such items as payroll, IT, or HR systems. The Commissioner's office is also identifying some systemwide shared services. A Shared Services Task Force will review and recommend proposals to the full Board as the initiative continues.

The committee traveled across the state to review building requests this year and made detailed reports to the Board. The Board held its prioritization session for building requests in September 2022 and voted to send one building request for the degree-granting institutions and one building request for the technical colleges for consideration in the 2023 legislative session, per the process set forth in S.B. 102, *Higher Education Capital Facilities* (passed in the 2019 legislative session).

Other committee work underway in 2022-23 includes inaugural comprehensive reporting on System scholarships and financial aid and increasing comparability and comprehensibility of financial data to help students to better inform the decisions of students and their families. Additionally, the Board is working with institutions to set one-year performance goals in access, timely completion, and workforce alignment in preparation for the implementation of the Legislature's new, forward-looking performance funding model.

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Simplified Admissions Initiative

According to a 2021 survey of high school seniors, students state that the process of applying to college and financial aid is a significant barrier to postsecondary education, with less than half of the students surveyed feeling comfortable navigating the application process. When disaggregated by race and ethnicity, BIPOC students identify the college application process as a more substantial barrier than white students. It is inefficient for all 16 of Utah's institutions to have a separate and different application process for students and their families to navigate. To respond to this barrier to access, the Board of Higher Education prioritized simplifying admissions processes as a key part of their strategic plan. The Simplified Admissions Task Force was established in April 2021, consisting of admissions representatives from all 16 USHE institutions. The task force is tasked with recommending a common application process—including considerations for direct admissions, application fees, and state scholarship application integrations—to the Student Affairs Committee of the Board at its December 2022 meeting.

Systemwide Student Wellness Resource Navigators

Students are far less likely to succeed or complete their higher education plans if they do not have their basic needs (such as food, housing, transportation, or health care) met. Thirty-nine percent of Utah higher education students experienced food insecurity in the past year. Students of color are food-insecure at higher rates than white students (48% vs. 36%), and roughly 45% of Utah's rural students are food insecure. In addition to food security, there are substantial basic needs of students that remain unmet, which directly leads to decreased retention and completion rates. Research demonstrates that the majority of students facing basic needs insecurity do not apply for support because they don't know they're eligible or don't know how to apply. The Board is focused on improving student completion rates, and in light of this challenge, the Board has voted to support a legislative funding request of $975,000 to fund 11 Student Wellness Resource Navigators, which will be deployed at single institutions or regionally as deemed appropriate. If funded, Student Wellness Resource Navigators will conduct outreach on campus, work with faculty and staff to identify students in need, and assist students with finding, applying for, and securing basic needs resources already available such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Regional College Access Partners

In support of the Board's strategic plan tactic of facilitating greater collaboration among Utah's college access partners, the Commissioner's office developed the Regional College Access Partners (RCAP) initiative, whereby eight regional networks of K-12 and institutional college access partners meet regularly to strengthen relationships and collaborate toward more equitable postsecondary access and outcomes for all Utah students. To help understand the existing nature of collaboration, the Commissioner's office created an inventory of college access programs operating at each school in the state and used that information to engage with hundreds of college access professionals over the course of the year through surveys and meetings. Intentionally engaging partners in the planning and development process honored existing work and ensured RCAP added value for college access professionals.

Over 130 college access professionals from programs such as the Utah College Advising Corps, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), TRIO, Latinos in Action (LIA), school district offices, USHE campuses, and more have committed to participating in RCAP in its inaugural 2022-23 school year. Each of the eight RCAP networks

is working on setting region-specific goals in college access to collaborate on. They will meet three times per year to network and collaborate toward college access goals in their region, and at the end of the school year, all eight networks will participate in a statewide convening hosted by the Commissioner's office to share successes and best practices.

Student Mental Health
As college student mental health continues to be a critical issue systemwide, the Board of Higher Education prioritized a $2 million legislative funding request for the 2023 legislative session to support student mental health and wellness. This request will support the implementation of institutional strategic plans for student mental health—which were developed through a systemwide partnership with JED Campus, a national student mental health expert in higher education program, policy, and plan development—as well as an expansion of mental health services for all students.

FAFSA Completion Increase
FAFSA completion is a priority for the Student Affairs Committee. The committee has worked with K-12 leadership to give students more information and opportunity to complete the FAFSA to access valuable financial aid to pursue higher education. Utah has one of the lowest FAFSA completion rates in the country and leaves $60 million on the table, which could benefit many students if the application were completed.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Technical Program Alignment

USHE's technical education institutions have made substantial progress on the Board goal of aligning technical education programs across all eight technical colleges. This will be valuable to students who need to move from one college to another but do not want to lose credit or momentum in their certificate and allow for system-level articulation agreements to expand transfer opportunities for students interested in educational growth. The Commissioner's office is creating an online inventory of aligned program information. Institutions will continue to implement aligned programs, and it is anticipated 52 of the approximately 80 aligned programs will be accepted by the Board by the end of this year, with ongoing effort by program committees. The committee is also considering policy changes to support the alignment of programs as well as processes for ongoing oversight of this effort. The committee is also considering policy changes to support the alignment of programs as well as processes for ongoing oversight of this effort.

Transition from Clock Hours to Credit Hours

Similarly, technical colleges are transitioning technical education from clock hours to credit hours to benefit students who need credit on their transcripts. This initiative creates a common currency between technical and degree-granting institutions. Davis, Dixie, and Southwest Technical Colleges will lead the implementation effort and seek approval of their applications to the technical college accrediting body. Salt Lake Community College will develop an implementation plan for the transition of technical education to credit and begin the transition process with necessary student scheduling adjustments. Other institutions will communicate changes to stakeholders, adjust policies and procedures, and prepare for implementation. A standardized process to charge tuition and fees in credits will be developed and implemented as programs transition. Additional updates will be made to the student information system and reports to reflect credit attempted.

Institutional Roles and Missions and Certificate Program Approval

In 2022-23, certificate credentials and characteristics will be defined according to institution roles and missions to address duplication of programming, ensuring students can complete technical education certificates at the most affordable rate and for the efficient use of state resources. Policies will be reviewed and revised with templates that institutions will use when requesting Board of Trustee approval of new certificate programs. Following approval, the information will be submitted to the Board as an information item and retained in the system records of approved programs. Institutional Boards of Trustees will be trained on the expectations and considerations of program approval.

Appendix

my529

my529 is Utah's official 529 educational savings plan. Currently the nation's third-largest direct-sold plan, my529 has been helping families in Utah and across the United States invest in higher education for more than 25 years.

Accounts are free to open and require no minimum deposit. my529 funds may be used for qualified higher education expenses, K-12 tuition expenses, qualified education loan repayments, and registered apprenticeships.

Beneficiaries can attend eligible educational institutions—colleges, universities, technical colleges, and graduate schools—anywhere in the U.S. or abroad that accept federal student aid.

With more than $18 billion in assets under management, my529 currently services more than 498,000 accounts (as of October 31, 2022).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In 2022, Utah's my529 plan again received national recognition by Morningstar as one of only two Gold-rated plans in the nation. my529 is the only plan to receive the Gold rating for 11 consecutive years.
- More than 10,000 new accounts for Utah residents were added in FY2022.
- my529's purpose is to help account owners grow their investment. In FY2022, 37% of every dollar withdrawn by Utah account owners came from earnings on their investment.
- More than $82.7 million was used by Utah account owners to pay for qualified higher education expenses in FY2022.

STUDENT SUCCESS ENDOWMENT

The Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority recently completed the divestment of its loan portfolio, and in the 2022 legislative session, the Utah Legislature created the Higher Education Student Success Endowment. The fund is invested by the State Treasurer, and the Board may use the proceeds to advance System priorities and to support prospective or current students enrolled at a USHE institution.

Under Utah Code, the Utah Board of Higher Education has a responsibility to:

- Act as trustee of the endowment and exercise the state's fiduciary responsibilities;
- Meet at least twice a year to conduct business on behalf of the endowment;
- Review and approve all endowment policies, projections, rules, criteria, procedures, forms, standards, and performance goals;
- Review and approve the budget and expenditures for the endowment;
- Review financial records for the endowment, including endowment receipts, expenditures, and investments; and
- Take any other action necessary to perform the Board's fiduciary obligations. The statute also requires the Board to annually submit a budget and expenditures to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

The Board is prohibited from using money from the endowment for a capital expenditure, including construction lease, operation, or maintenance of a capital facility.