

USHE Weekly Legislative Report
Seventh Week: March 10 - March 13, 2014
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This is the seventh and final weekly report for 2014 on the legislative session from the perspective of the Utah System of Higher Education, for distribution to Regents, Presidents, and Trustees. A final comprehensive report will be prepared for the Board of Regents meeting on March 28, 2014. Overall, it is a remarkable year for higher education, the work and unity of the institutions, their presidents, and the legislative liaisons helped reinforce the system's budget priorities.

2014-2015 Budget. After a weekend of extended meetings by legislative leadership, the 2014-15 budget took shape early this week. The Legislature made a significant commitment in support of public higher education. We are grateful that long-standing acute equity and capacity issues at several institutions were addressed with major new funding. The Co-Chairs of the Higher Education Appropriations Committee were instrumental in advocating the USHE budget priorities during the final days of the legislative session.

USHE received a compensation increase of 1.25%, along with additional funding to help cover healthcare and retirement cost increases. For mission-based funding, \$50 million of the Regents' \$69.7 million request was funded for Acute Equity, which goes to UVU, SLCC, WSU, DSU and the Regional Campuses of USU. Mission Based Funding Distinctive Mission, which goes to each institution, was funded at \$7 million. This will help with initiatives to increase participation, completion, and regional economic development. Finally \$1.5 million in one-time funds was appropriated to continue the performance-based funding initiative started last year.

Other appropriations include one-time funding to funding the popular Regents' Scholarship (\$3. million) as well as New Century Scholarship (\$500,000) sufficient to fund the full award amounts. Ongoing funds were approved for the second part of funding for the Veterinary Science program at Utah State (\$1.5 million), funding for graduate programs at Utah State University (\$650,000, and \$500,000 one-time funds), implementation of the university mission at Dixie State (\$2 million), and the Snow College Concurrent Enrollment Program (\$1.3 million). Additional ongoing appropriations include the Dixie Crime Lab (\$250,000), USHE college readiness program (\$1 million), and Veterans Tuition Gap Coverage (\$125,000). Other one-time appropriations include \$500,000 for the USU Water Conservation program and \$150,000 for the University of Utah Nursing Program. Significant funding was also provided for capital improvements, including for infrastructure at the University of Utah.

These increase amount to an overall budget increase of 11.2% for USHE. For comparison, the original USHE budget priorities approved by the Board of Regents, with the support of institution presidents, is available [here](#).

Capital Budget. Funding for two of the Regents' top capital development priorities were approved by the Legislature: 57.4\$ million for a new science building at Weber State University, and \$26.5 million for instructional buildings on the Brigham City and Price (USU Eastern) Campuses of Utah State University.

Key Legislation of Interest to USHE Approved by the Legislature:

- **HB 72, Higher Education Grievance Procedure** by Rep. Mark Wheatley, requires the Board of Regents to enact regulations pertaining to an employee grievance. The legislation requires sworn testimony for hearings related to employee demotions and terminations. The bill was amended to exclude faculty. The bill was approved by the full Senate.
- **1st Sub. HB 405, Postsecondary School State Authorization*** by Rep. James Dunnigan, modifies requirements for proprietary colleges and universities and allows the Dept. of Commerce to enter into interstate reciprocity agreements on behalf of USHE, alleviating the requirement for institutions to individually enter into such agreements. This provides a more efficient and coordinated process for institutions to offer services in other states (e.g. distance education). The bill unanimously passed the full Senate.
- **HB 426, Retirement Participation Amendments** by Rep. Don Ipson, requires an entity to continue participation or withdraw in the Utah Retirement System by January 1, 2015. If an entity withdraws, it would be required to pay the actuarial and administrative costs. The sponsor amended the bill exempting higher education institutions and the bill unanimously passed the House Retirement Entities Committee.
- **SB 16, Veterans Tuition Gap Coverage*** by Sen. Luz Robles, provides state funded grants to qualifying military veterans who have maximized federal financial aid benefits. The bill passed the full House.
- **2nd Sub. SB 22, Workforce Services Job Listing Amendments***, by Sen. Peter Knudson, requires government entities advertise job openings on the state website, *jobs.utah.gov*. The substitute bill excludes job postings for USHE faculty and student-related positions. The bill was approved by the full House.
- **SB 34, Governance of the Utah Education and Workforce Alliance** by Sen. Howard Stephenson, proposed a multi-agency governing board for the Utah Futures and Utah Data Alliance initiatives, to be administered by the Utah Education Network. The bill failed in the House.
- **SB 38 (1st Sub.), Snow College Concurrent Education Program*** by Sen. Ralph Okerlund, Establishes a program that requires Snow College to provide concurrent enrollments courses via interactive video to rural school districts under direction of the Board of Regents. The substitute bill was passed unanimously by the full House.
- **SB 68, Veterans Centers*** by Sen. Peter Knudson, requires the State Board of Regents to study the feasibility of providing a veterans center or veterans services at each USHE institution as well as develop a plan for implementing those services. The bill passed the full House.
- **SB 80 (1st Sub.), Statewide Online Education Amendments** by Sen. Howard Stephenson, allows a USHE institutions to offer a secondary school level course or a concurrent enrollment course through the Statewide Online Education Program operated by the Utah State Office of Education. The bill passed the Senate but failed passage in the House.
- **SB 170 (1st Sub.), Education Loan Amendments** by Senator Peter Knudson, modifies the Utah Consumer Code in relation to student loans limiting garnishments related to student loans provided by private lenders. This bill replaces a previous version that would have negatively impacted USHE institutions as well as the Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA). The bill passed the full House.