

USHE Weekly Legislative Report
First Week: January 27 – January 31, 2014
By Dave Buhler, Commissioner of Higher Education
February 3, 2013

This is the first 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. Spencer Jenkins, Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs, assisted with this report.

Overview. The 2014 Session of the Utah State Legislature got underway on Monday, January 27, and will conclude Thursday, March 13. There will be a number of bills with potential impact to the Utah System of Higher Education, all of which will be carefully tracked by the Commissioner's Office and institutions.

Governor Gary Herbert delivered his State of the State address on Wednesday, with an emphasis on prioritizing funding of education at all levels and reaffirmed his commitment to the goal of 66% by 2020.

2013-2014 Budget. According to the state's consensus revenue estimates, the state has a surplus from last year. Revenue growth in the coming year have are projected to result in \$132 million in new one-time funds and \$206 million in new ongoing funds. These revenues are slightly less than last year; an updated revenue estimate will be available in mid-February.

Please Note: The annual Higher Education Legislative Luncheon, sponsored by Rocky Mountain Power and Questar, will be on Friday, February 14, 12 Noon, State Capitol Rotunda. All Legislators, Regents, Presidents, Trustees and Student Body Presidents are invited. (Please arrive by 11:30.)

The Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee met four times this week, focusing on the existing base budget for higher education. Chair Bonnie Jean Beesley opened by outlining the role of the Regents and the way the Regents, Trustees, Commissioner and Presidents are all working together and how legislative support is needed. Commissioner Buhler provided introductory remarks by comparing Utah higher education with national averages. A primary theme of his remarks was the precipitous drop, especially in the past five years, of state funds in support of higher education compared to the rest of the nation. That drop in funding is especially pertinent as enrollment growth in Utah is expected to double that of the nation in the next decade. The Commissioner's slides can viewed [here](#).

Each institution president provided informative presentations that truly illustrate their leadership in driving efficiencies and reprioritizing resources at all of our USHE institutions. Committee members expressed appreciation for the quality of presentations. Higher Education Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Steve Urquhart and Rep. Keith Grover, praised the presidents for their presentations, as did other committee members. Among those were , Senator Howard Stephenson who commented on Friday:

“I've listened to a lot of presentations from our presidents over the years. But as I was listening this session, I'm grateful for the leadership we have at each of our institutions. Not only their vision and passion, but their ability to communicate it is exceptional. I don't know when we've had a team like this, ever. It's quite incredible.”

At the request of the committee Commissioner Buhler provided information regarding the Utah Data Alliance – a federally funded partnership with the Utah State Office of Education and the Utah College of Applied Technology (presentation slides available [here](#)). The grant funds expire

on June 30, 2014 and Governor Herbert has recommended \$1.2 million in one-time funds to continue the efforts of the Alliance. Upcoming subcommittee meetings over the next two weeks will focus on upcoming FY 2014-15 budget and the current USHE funding request. Upcoming agendas are available [here](#).

Capital Budget. The Infrastructure Subcommittee will hear requests for capital development funding on Monday, February 3, 2014. Agenda includes the new Science Lab Building (WSU), and the USU Eastern and USU Brigham City Regional Campuses. The agenda is available [here](#).

Key Legislation of Interest to USHE

- **HB 32, College Credit for Veterans** by Rep. Tim Cosgrove, modifies legislation passed in the 2013 Legislative session requiring student veterans to meet with a student advisor before the award of credit. New legislation requires USHE institutions to provide written notification to student veterans of the requirement to meet with a college counselor before being eligible to transfer college credit. The bill was endorsed by the Veterans Reintegration Taskforce during the interim and has passed the full house, and goes on to the Senate for further consideration.
- **HB 45, In-State Tuition for Military Servicemembers and Veterans** by Rep. Curt Oda, provides ability for military service members, veterans and their immediate family members to be considered a resident for in-state tuition purposes. The bill is currently awaiting a committee hearing.
- **HB 72, Higher Education Grievance Procedure** by Rep. Mark Wheatley, requires the Board of Regents to enact regulations requiring all testimony pertaining to an employee grievance hearing be given under oath. The bill is currently awaiting a committee hearing.
- **HB 92, Utah Telehealth and Education Network Amendments** by Rep. Ronda Menlove, combines the functions of the Utah Education Network and the Utah Telehealth Network as well as modifies the board membership of the current Utah Education Network. The bill is currently awaiting a committee hearing.
- **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 is currently awaiting a committee hearing.
- **SB 34, Governance of the Utah Education and Workforce Alliance** by Sen. Howard Stephenson, establishes a multi-agency governing board for the Utah Futures and Utah Data Alliance initiatives, to be administered by the Utah Education Network. The bill requires that certain information be made available to the public and a report be made to the Education Interim Committee by August 1, 2014 determining whether all or part of the Utah Futures application should be outsourced to a private provider.
- **SB 38, Rural Superintendent 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 in coordination with other USHE institutions. The bill requires Snow College to establish a two-year schedule of course offerings via concurrent enrollment and provide advisory support to secondary school students. The bill is currently awaiting a committee hearing.
- **SB 151, Religious Freedom Instruction Requirements** by Sen. Stuart Reid, requires, as part of an award of a bachelor's degree, students must demonstrate reasonable understanding of the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, including religious freedom. The bill is currently awaiting a committee hearing.

* USHE has taken an official position in support; ** USHE has taken an official position in opposition.

For more information on legislation, committee agendas, or to view or listen to floor debates, see: <http://le.utah.gov/>