



2019 Utah Legislative Session Recap

The 2019 Utah Legislative Session concluded on Thursday, March 14. Utah Valley University had a number of budget request priorities, including funding for a new business building and student growth and capacity. The Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee (HEAS) heard presentations from all eight presidents in the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) about their institutional priorities. While some funding was appropriated for student growth and capacity needs, the majority of higher education ongoing funding was allocated to performance-based initiatives. Institutions were given latitude to apply their performance-based funds toward strategies that will help them most improve their key performance measures. The following are budget and bill highlights from the session as of March 15 (additional clarifying information is expected early next week).

Budget Highlights

Capital facilities priorities

\$50 million appropriated for UVU's Business Building, as well as ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. (UVU will need to raise through private funds a total of \$25 million to complete the building — \$13 million has already been raised.)

Budget priorities

2.5 percent labor market increase for salaries/wages

4.35 percent medical premium increase

\$5 million to USHE for Student Growth (UVU will receive \$1,696,900)

\$5 million to USHE for Engineering Initiative (UVU should receive \$800,000)

\$31,500,000 to USHE for Performance-Based Funding (UVU should receive \$4,897,900)

In total, UVU anticipates a base budget tax fund increase of \$12,792,700 or 10.9 percent.

Bill Highlights

Passed legislation

SB 102 (1st Sub.), Higher Education Capital Facilities by Sen. Ann Millner, creates capital development project funds for state colleges and universities and another for technical colleges. It also establishes criteria for project funding. Currently, colleges and universities submit building proposals to the Board of Regents. The regents prioritize the requests, and their list is proposed to the State Building Board, then to the legislature's Infrastructure and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee (IGG), and ultimately to the full legislature. The goal of the bill is to

appropriate funding to colleges and universities for cost-effective building, planning, and design, while maintaining oversight for final approval of state-funded construction.

SB 09, Revenue Bonds and Capital Facilities Authorizations by Sen. Cullimore, authorizes UVU to bond for \$24.5M to remodel the Sorensen Student Center. The bond repayment will be paid through student fees.

HB 188 (1st sub), T.H. Bell Program Amendments by Rep. Lowry Snow, transitions the T.H. Bell Teaching Incentive Loan Program into a scholarship with a goal to increase the number of students entering education-related college programs. The Utah Council of Education Deans (comprised of deans who oversee teacher preparation programs in Utah's colleges and universities) has worked closely with Rep. Snow over the interim and endorsed this legislation.

HB 260 (3rd Sub.), Access Utah Promise Scholarship by Rep. Derrin Owens creates a statewide scholarship program patterned after Dream Weber and SLCC Promise. These innovative programs, which pay the remaining college costs for qualifying students when federal grants fall short, are showing compelling results: Dream Weber students graduate from Weber State University at significantly higher rates than do non-Dream Weber students (73 to 44 percent, respectively). The scholarship will be available not only for students right out of high school, but adult learners as well at both USHE and UTECH institutions. Modifications were made to this bill, leaving intact the regents' and New Century Scholarships.

HB 291, Concurrent Enrollment Modifications by Rep. Mike Winder, clarifies legislation from the 2018 legislative session requiring the Board of Regents to establish policy, in coordination with higher education concurrent enrollment directors, that defines the qualifications to be an eligible concurrent enrollment instructor. Current instructors for the 2017-18 academic year will continue to be eligible regardless of qualifications.

HB 346, Higher Education Responses to Allegations by Rep. Kim Coleman, outlines circumstances when an institution turns information over to law enforcement in instances considered an articulable and significant threat to campus safety. The bill also mandates that colleges offer amnesty from conduct code violations for students, which USHE institutions already have in policy. The sponsor has worked during the interim with advocacy groups and USHE.

SB 164, Student Data Privacy Amendments by Sen. Jacob Anderegg, eliminates the requirement for individual parental consent for student information to be shared from K-12 schools to the Utah State Board of Regents for purposes of outreach and access. This barrier has led to significant challenges in student recruiting and outreach due to legislative action adopted three years ago. These barriers are recognized frustrations by both higher education and K-12 leaders.

Failed legislation

HB 158, Higher Education Student Speech Rights by Rep. Kim Coleman, wanted to establish a specific threshold that determines when student-on-student speech becomes harassment as opposed to protected speech. The U.S. Department of Education is considering similar provisions in the coming months.

HB 248, Education Fund Designation Ratio by Rep. Marsha Judkins, proposed a limit to the portion of revenue in the Education Fund (income tax revenues) to be designated for higher education at 15 percent (amended in committee to 20 percent). In the most recent year, higher education (including USHE, UETN, UTECH, and buildings) received 17.6 percent from the Education Fund in FY19. This bill would have restricted the legislature’s flexibility and potentially made it more difficult to fund higher education in the future.

HB 442, Family Leave Amendments by Rep. Elizabeth Weight, would have required public higher education institutions, along with state agencies, to offer paid parental leave to eligible employees. The University of Utah and Utah Valley University have already adopted such family leave policies.

HB 454, Tuition Waiver and Scholarship Study by Rep. Melissa Ballard, would have required the Board of Regents to study and report on outcomes of state scholarship and waiver programs, including student retention, completion, and participation in Utah’s workforce.