



MINUTES

HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 19, 2025 | 8:00 a.m. | 110 Senate Building

Members Present:

Sen. Ann Millner, Senate Chair
Rep. Karen M. Peterson, House Chair
Rep. R. Neil Walter, Vice Chair
Sen. Keith Grover
Sen. John D. Johnson
Sen. Karen Kwan
Sen. Kathleen A. Riebe
Sen. Evan J. Vickers
Sen. Chris H. Wilson
Rep. Katy Hall
Rep. Jon Hawkins
Rep. Sahara Hayes

Rep. Trevor Lee
Rep. Michael J. Petersen
Rep. Mark A. Strong
Rep. Ryan D. Wilcox

Members Absent:

Sen. Michael K. McKell

Staff Present:

Joseph Ryan Fitzgerald, Finance Officer
Ben Leishman, Finance Manager
Mike Curtis, Managing Associate General Counsel
Lorna Wells, Committee Secretary

Note: A copy of related materials and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. 8:00 AM Call to Order and Approval of Minutes - June 17, 2025

Chair Karen Peterson called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

2. 8:05 AM Board of Higher Education Strategic Reinvestment Introduction

Geoff Landward, Commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education gave some introductory comments about the Strategic Reinvestment process.

[2a. USHE Strategic Reinvestment Slides August Interim](#)

Nate Talley, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Financial Officer, USHE, gave an overview of the reinvestment plan process.

Sen. Riebe reported on constituents' concerns stating that the process was quite arbitrary and capricious. Comm. Landward responded. Sen. Riebe asked a follow-up question regarding the importance of addressing some current societal concerns such as mental health rather than so much emphasis on occupational optimization.

Rep. Hayes asked about the flexibility of this reinvestment plan to keep up with the constant changes occurring. Comm. Landward responded.

Sen. Johnson gave some positive comments about the process.

Sen. Wilson thanked the commissioner, the USHE team, and the institutions for their work on this plan.

Sen. Vickers commented that the institutions have worked very hard on the reinvestment. He encouraged committee members to review how the process was completed at each institution.

Sen. Kwan mentioned the biggest challenge about the initiative is to make sure that faculty, staff, and students are involved and to look at workforce needs and flexibility.

Nate Talley concluded his presentation and Chair Karen Peterson commended the Board on their work.

Sen. Millner thanked the Board for their great work to make difficult but productive decisions.

3. 8:15 AM Utah Valley University Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Astrid Tuminez, President, gave some initial comments regarding Utah Valley University's Strategic Reinvestment Plan.

Jim Mortensen, Vice President, gave an overview of the reinvestment plan.

[3a. UVU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Sen. Kwan expressed appreciation to Pres. Tuminez for her hard work and commented on the importance of retaining faculty in the upper division and graduate level general education courses. Pres. Tuminez responded.

Rep. Hayes asked how many eliminated positions are employees that are being re-directed. V.P. Mortensen responded.

Rep. Strong commented on the very positive experience of his son at UVU last week.

4. 8:35 AM Utah Tech University Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Shane Smeed, President, gave an overview of Utah Tech University's Strategic Reinvestment Plan.

[4a. UTU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Sen. Vickers asked if the reinvestment opportunities would have been available without the process and if the university is in a better place now. Pres. Smeed responded.

Michael Lacourse, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, also commented.

Rep. Strong asked for clarification about the full-time and part-time teaching positions. Pres. Smeed responded.

5. 8:55 AM Weber State University Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Brad Mortensen, President, gave a brief overview of Weber State University's Strategic Reinvestment Plan.

[5a. WSU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Sen. Riebe stated that the major employer in the state is education. She expressed concern about the cuts of individuals in these fields and the economic impact on local economies.

Sen. Vickers commented about the importance of mental health programs. Pres. Mortensen responded.

Rep. Michael Petersen asked about the cut in the construction management program. Pres. Mortensen responded.

Sen. Johnson commented on the positive impact of the student success initiatives. Pres. Mortensen responded.

6. 9:15 AM Southern Utah University Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Mindy Benson, President, gave an overview of Southern Utah University's Strategic Reinvestment Plan with the assistance of Shauna Mendini, Interim Provost of Academic Affairs.

[6a. SUU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Sen. Kwan asked for clarification on the reduction roll out slide and expressed concern about the elimination of faculty positions. Pres. Benson responded.

Sen. Vickers asked if the reinvestment opportunities would have been possible without the process and if students are better off. Pres. Benson responded.

7. 9:35 AM Snow College Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Stacey McIlff, President, gave an overview of Snow College's Strategic Reinvestment Plan with the assistance of Michael Austin, Provost, Academic Affairs.

[7a. Snow Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

[7b. Snow Strategic Reinvestment Plan Executive Summary](#)

[7c. Snow Strategic Reinvestment Plan Full Narrative](#)

Rep. Strong commented on his positive personal experiences with Snow College.

8. 9:55 AM Salt Lake Community College Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Greg Peterson, President, gave an overview of Salt Lake Community College's Strategic Reinvestment Plan with the assistance of Sarah Reale, Director of Digital Marketing.

[8a. SLCC Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Sen. Kwan mentioned the difficulty of not knowing what jobs will be available in 5 years. She asked if the reinvestment was a good process. Pres. Peterson responded.

Chair Peterson congratulated SLCC on reallocating more than was required.

9. 10:15 AM Utah State University Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Alan Smith, Interim President, gave an overview of Utah State University's Strategic Reinvestment Plan.

[9a. USU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Rep. Michael Petersen appreciated Pres. Smith's stepping in at such a tumultuous time at USU.

Sen. Kwan expressed concern about the faculty's frustration with the reinvestment plan. Pres. Smith responded.

Rep. Walter thanked Pres. Smith for his leadership during the transition. He noted that an audit report from Utah State University governance and procurement processes will be discussed later this afternoon.

MOTION: Rep. Walter moved to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2025 meeting. The motion passed with a vote of 14 - 0 - 3.

Yeas - 14

Sen. K. Grover
Rep. K. Hall
Rep. J. Hawkins
Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Sen. K. Kwan
Rep. T. Lee
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Sen. K. Riebe
Rep. M. Strong
Sen. E. Vickers
Rep. R. Walter
Rep. R. Wilcox

Nays - 0Absent - 3

Sen. M. McKell
Sen. A. Millner
Sen. C. Wilson

10. 10:35 AM University of Utah Strategic Reinvestment Presentation

Taylor Randall, President, participated remotely and gave an overview of the University of Utah's Strategic Reinvestment Initiative with the assistance of Jason Perry, Vice President for Government Relations; and Mitzi Montoya, Provost and Executive Vice President of Student Affairs.

[10a. UU Strategic Reinvestment Plan Presentation](#)

Rep. Walter commented that the university had the largest reinvestment assignment and expressed appreciation for their great focus and diligence.

Rep. Hawkins applauded all of the institutions on the great work in this restructuring process.

11. 10:55 AM Subcommittee Voting

Mike Curtis, Attorney, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, explained that the committee's task is to determine whether the strategic reinvestment plans comply with the statute in H.B. 265.

[11a. Strategic Reinvestment Broad Summary August 2025](#)

Sen. Kwan asked if the statute delineated where the reinvestment funds came from. Chair Karen Peterson responded.

Sen. Riebe commented that the cuts made should have been more reflective of the employment needs.

Chair Karen Peterson gave clarification about what is taking place today.

MOTION: Rep. Walter moved to recommend to the Executive Appropriations Committee the Strategic Reinvestment Plans from the following schools as compliant with the requirements outlined in UCA 53B-7-107: Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Southern Utah University, the University of Utah, Utah Tech University, Utah Valley University, and Weber State University. He further moved to adopt the Utah Board of Higher Education's recommendation regarding Utah State University and recommend their Strategic Reinvestment Plan as compliant upon review and approval of the new university president.

Rep. Walter spoke to the motion.

Sen. Kwan asked for clarification regarding the specific information about Utah State University. Chair Karen Peterson responded.

Sen. Kwan commented that she can support the motion moving forward to the Executive Appropriations Committee but expressed concern about cutting programs without looking at the state-wide impact. She would also like to look at athletics programs.

Sen. Vickers echoed the comments from Rep. Walter and expressed appreciation to the chairs and vice chair for their tremendous work on this legislation and initiative.

Rep. Michael Petersen commented that this has been a very difficult process for the institutions. He noted some of the positive aspects.

Sen. Riebe commented that the restructuring of the institutions was something that was needed. She is very concerned about the state-wide economic impacts for jobs lost in the education sector.

Chair Karen Peterson commented that this process has not been easy and has taken over a year.

Rep. Walter's motion passed with a vote of 13 - 1 - 3.

Yeas - 13

Rep. K. Hall
Rep. J. Hawkins
Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Sen. K. Kwan
Rep. T. Lee
Sen. A. Millner
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Rep. M. Strong
Sen. E. Vickers
Rep. R. Walter
Rep. R. Wilcox

Nays - 1

Sen. K. Riebe

Absent - 3

Sen. K. Grover
Sen. M. McKell
Sen. C. Wilson

MOTION: Rep. Hayes moved to adjourn. The motion passed with a vote of 13 - 0 - 4.

Yeas - 13

Rep. K. Hall
Rep. J. Hawkins
Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Sen. K. Kwan
Sen. A. Millner
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Sen. K. Riebe
Rep. M. Strong
Sen. E. Vickers
Rep. R. Walter
Rep. R. Wilcox

Nays - 0

Absent - 4

Sen. K. Grover
Rep. T. Lee
Sen. M. McKell
Sen. C. Wilson

Chair Karen Peterson adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.