



DRAFT MINUTES

HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

LEGISLATURE

Thursday, January 22, 2026 | 8:00 a.m. | 110 Senate Building

Members Present:

Sen. Ann Millner, Senate Chair
Rep. Karen M. Peterson, House Chair
Rep. Jill Koford, Vice Chair
Sen. John D. Johnson
Sen. Karen Kwan
Sen. Kathleen A. Riebe
Sen. Evan J. Vickers
Rep. Katy Hall
Rep. Sahara Hayes
Rep. Trevor Lee
Rep. Michael J. Petersen

Rep. Mark A. Strong

Rep. R. Neil Walter
Rep. Ryan D. Wilcox

Members Absent:

Sen. Keith Grover
Sen. Michael K. McKell
Sen. Chris H. Wilson

Staff Present:

Joseph Fitzgerald, Finance Officer
Ben Leishman, Finance Manager
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. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes – October 14

Chair Millner called the meeting to order at 08:04 AM.

MOTION: Rep. Karen Peterson moved to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2025 meeting. The motion passed with a vote of 9 - 0 - 8.

Yeas - 9

Rep. S. Hayes
Rep. J. Koford
Sen. K. Kwan
Sen. A. Millner
Rep. M. Petersen
Rep. K. Peterson
Sen. K. Riebe
Sen. E. Vickers
Rep. R. Walter

Nays - 0

Absent - 8

Sen. K. Grover
Rep. K. Hall
Sen. J. Johnson
Rep. T. Lee
Sen. M. McKell
Rep. M. Strong
Rep. R. Wilcox
Sen. C. Wilson

2. Subcommittee Introduction and Base Budget

Joseph Fitzgerald gave an overview of the role and process of the subcommittee.

[2a. HED Budget Introduction 2026 GS](#)

Joseph Fitzgerald gave an overview of the Higher Education Base Budget.

[2b. Higher Education Base Budget](#)

Joseph Fitzgerald explained the current status of the five percent reduction target.

3. Subcommittee Allocation and 5% Reduction Target

[3a. Subcommittee Allocation and 5% Reduction](#)

Sen. Riebe asked for clarification about the ten percent reduction from last year and the five percent additional cut. Chair Millner responded.

Sen. Riebe asked about the Higher Education Endowment Fund. Joseph Fitzgerald responded.

Sen. Riebe asked about out-of-state tuition swaps. Joseph Fitzgerald responded.

Sen. Kwan asked for clarification about the recommended cuts from LFA. Joseph Fitzgerald responded.

Rep. Hall asked for clarification about the endowment fund. Joseph Fitzgerald and Chair Millner responded.

Sen. Kwan expressed concern that when the committee makes cuts, it is likely that the funds will not be returned. Chair Millner responded.

4. Utah Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Budget Presentation

Utah Board of Higher Education Board members Jon Cox and Jeremy Hafen were recognized as well as Utah System of Higher Education staff members.

[4a. Utah Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Budget Presentation](#)

Geoff Landward, Commissioner of Higher Education gave an overview of the Higher Education budget.

Nate Talley, Deputy Commissioner and CFO explained the strategic reinvestments and UBHE actions

Chair Millner asked for some data that shows comparisons with other Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) institutions. Nate Talley responded and continued the presentation.

Angie Stallings, Deputy Commissioner and COO, discussed Admit Utah, First Credential, and concurrent enrollment with the technical colleges..

Sen. Kwan asked for clarification about the participation in the Admit Utah program. Angie Stallings responded.

Sen. Riebe mentioned the change in taking some of the competitiveness away from USHE institutions. She expressed concern about opportunities in the rural areas.

Angie Stallings continued giving information about integrating concurrent enrollment with the technical colleges.

Geoff Landward discussed some of the actions that have been taken with artificial intelligence.

Geoff Landward discussed the consensus budget approach.

Nate Talley presented the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Operating Budget Requests.

Chair Millner asked which institutions had not met the high yield goals. Nate Talley responded and continued the presentation.

Chair Millner asked for some historical data regarding enrollment funding and capacity funding. Nate Talley and Geoff Landward responded. Nate Talley then continued the presentation.

Chair Millner asked for clarification about the capital budget requests. Nate Talley responded.

Geoff Landward discussed the five percent reduction proposal and response.

Chair Millner asked several clarifying questions. Nate Talley responded to the questions.

Sen. Riebe asked if there are statutory programs that are receiving budget cuts. Geoff Landward responded.

Chair Millner thanked the Commissioner's Office and the Higher Education Board for all of their good work.

5. Enrollment Growth and Performance Funding Models Outline

Joseph Fitzgerald gave a summary of the enrollment growth and performance models outline that was discussed in October.

[**5a. Enrollment Growth and Performance Funding Models Outline**](#)

Sen. Kwan asked for clarification about the performance metrics and access data. Chair Millner responded.

Rep. Karen Peterson mentioned that the current model will show full-time and part-time students. Joseph Fitzgerald continued the presentation.

6. Equal Opportunity Initiatives Presentation

Geoff Landward introduced Dave Pulsipher, Senior Assistant Commissioner of Compliance, who gave an update regarding H.B. 261 (2023GS) Equal Opportunity Compliance.

[**6a. Equal Opportunity Initiatives Compliance Review Report**](#)

Sen. Riebe asked about the funding for the bill. David Pulsipher responded.

Sen. Kwan expressed concern about interpretation of this bill bringing about the closure of many various resource centers. Geoff Landward responded.

Rep. Hall mentioned that her observations of the student success centers have had many positive results.

Rep. Karen Peterson assumed the chair.

7. Request for Appropriation – Rocket Engine Test Facility and Launch Site (Sen. Millner)

Sen. Millner explained the Rocket Engine Test Facility and Launch Site funding request with the assistance of Matt Ryan, Director of Development, and Brahm Soltes, Director of Airspace Management, from the Advanced Propulsion Association.

[**RFA - Rocket Engine Test Facility and Launch Site**](#)

[**7a. Rocket Engine Test Facility and Launch Site RFA**](#)

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

Yeas - 13

Rep. K. Hall
Rep. S. Hayes
Sen. J. Johnson
Rep. J. Koford
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 10:46 AM.