



# MINUTES

## HIGHER EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Thursday, February 5, 2026 | 8:00 a.m. | 26 South 2000 East, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

### 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. Evan J. Vickers  
Rep. Katy Hall  
Rep. Michael J. Petersen  
Rep. Mark A. Strong  
Rep. R. Neil Walter

### Members Absent:

Sen. Keith Grover  
Sen. Michael K. McKell  
Sen. Kathleen A. Riebe  
Sen. Chris H. Wilson  
Rep. Sahara Hayes  
Rep. Trevor Lee  
Rep. Ryan D. Wilcox

### 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](http://www.le.utah.gov).

## 1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes - February 3, 2026

Chair Karen Peterson called the meeting to order at 08:06 AM.

**MOTION:** Sen. Millner moved to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2026 meeting. The motion passed with a vote of 9 - 0 - 8.

### Yeas - 9

Rep. K. Hall  
Rep. J. Koford  
Sen. K. Kwan  
Sen. A. Millner  
Rep. M. Petersen  
Rep. K. Peterson  
Rep. M. Strong  
Sen. E. Vickers  
Rep. R. Walter

### Nays - 0

### Absent - 8

Sen. K. Grover  
Rep. S. Hayes  
Sen. J. Johnson  
Rep. T. Lee  
Sen. M. McKell  
Sen. K. Riebe  
Rep. R. Wilcox  
Sen. C. Wilson

## 2. University of Utah Presentation

Joseph Fitzgerald gave a brief overview about the University of Utah.

### [2a. University of Utah Budget Introduction 26GS](#)

Taylor Randall, President, University of Utah gave a presentation about the university.

### [2b. University of Utah Presentation 26GS](#)

Sen. Kwan asked about the current waiting list for graduate students in medical and law school. Pres. Randall responded and continued the presentation.

Rep. Strong asked how tuition prices can stay lower than inflation. He also asked how to ensure that scholarship recipients are invested in their own education. Pres. Randall responded.

Chair Karen Peterson asked how many undergraduate students is the right number for the university's role in the system. Pres. Randall responded and continued the presentation.

Sen. Johnson commented about the incentives offered to maintain enrollment but also being able to increase admission standards. Pres. Randall responded.

Sen. Kwan asked about the drop in the number of international students. Pres. Randall responded.

Rep. Walter mentioned the importance of gaining an education in achieving the "American Dream" today. Pres. Randall responded.

Rep. Michael Petersen asked for clarification about how the university administered the reallocation process. Pres. Randall responded.

Sen. Vickers asked about the best way to have students get into the program that best fits them. Pres. Randall responded.

### **3. University of Utah Research Presentation**

Pres. Randall gave a brief introduction to the history of research at the University.

Erin Rothwell, Vice President for Research, University of Utah discussed the current research activity at the university.

Pres. Randall reported on the societal impacts of the research and the utilization of funding.

Sen. Johnson commented about the use of AI for cancer research. Pres. Randall responded.

Rep. Hall thanked the University for hosting the meeting, for the presentation, and for their great work.

Joseph Fitzgerald gave a brief overview about Utah State University.

### **4. Utah State University Presentation**

#### **[4a. Utah State University Budget Introduction 26GS](#)**

Brad Mortensen, President, Utah State University (USU) introduced many individuals in attendance from USU as well as some members from the Board of Trustees. Pres. Mortensen then gave a presentation about USU.

#### **[4b. Utah State University Presentation 26GS](#)**

Sen. Kwan commented on the Center for Civic Excellence. She asked if the goals involved faculty input. Pres. Mortensen responded and continued the presentation.

Danelia Rumbo-Barajas, nursing student, discussed her positive experiences specifically with in-person classes at the Moab campus.

Pres. Mortensen continued the presentation.

Rep. Koford expressed gratitude for the science and research based decisions made with regards to water.

### **5. Utah State University Research Presentation**

Chair Karen Peterson thanked Dani for sharing her experiences and that it was very impactful.

Pres. Mortensen discussed the research currently taking place at the university.

Chair Karen Peterson mentioned her recent experiences on the trade mission and seeing the world-wide impact of the research being done at USU.

### **6. 9:45 a.m. Request for Appropriation - Higher Education Research Funding Pilot Program (Sen. Millner)**

Sen. Millner mentioned her personal educational pathway. She discussed the critical importance of research at the graduate university level.

#### [6a. Higher Education Research Funding Pilot Program RFA](#)

Sen. Kwan expressed excitement about this program. She asked where the money would come from. Sen. Millner responded.

Sen. Johnson expressed his support for the program and the importance of this work.

Chair Karen Peterson explained that the bill relating to this funding request is H.B. 373, which she is sponsoring along with Sen. Millner.

Chair Karen Peterson thanked committee members, staff, the University, and public who came and participated in the meeting today. She mentioned that there would still be opportunities to tour a research lab after the meeting.

**MOTION:** Rep. Strong moved to adjourn. The motion passed with a vote of 10 - 0 - 7.

#### Yeas - 10

Rep. K. Hall  
Sen. J. Johnson  
Rep. J. Koford  
Sen. K. Kwan  
Sen. A. Millner  
Rep. M. Petersen  
Rep. K. Peterson  
Rep. M. Strong  
Sen. E. Vickers  
Rep. R. Walter

#### Nays - 0

#### Absent - 7

Sen. K. Grover  
Rep. S. Hayes  
Rep. T. Lee  
Sen. M. McKell  
Sen. K. Riebe  
Rep. R. Wilcox  
Sen. C. Wilson

Chair Karen Peterson adjourned the meeting at 10:13 AM.