

Utah is at a crossroads.

As the state with the youngest population in the nation and a quickly growing economy, Utah is full of opportunity. The state is in the midst of developing a strong technology and start-up sector¹, and continually ranks as the top state for business, career opportunity² and economic competitiveness.³

In order for the state to maintain its upward trajectory, postsecondary education is critical. There was a time when well-paying jobs were plentiful for high school graduates. No more. The workplace demand for a high school diploma has plummeted⁴ as today's jobs require an increasing amount of postsecondary education and training.⁵ Employers value a talent force that is not only technologically savvy but also adept at the *soft* skills critical to workplace success, such as communication, critical thinking and social awareness. The hard *and* soft skills learned in college are more important than ever.⁶

Utah's workforce demands are rapidly changing:

- By 2017, an estimated 2.5 million new middle-skill jobs—requiring some type of postsecondary training—will be added to the workforce in the United States, accounting for nearly 40 percent of all job growth. The Salt Lake Metropolitan area is one of four regions in the country where livable-wage, middle-skill jobs requiring postsecondary training will be the primary driver for overall job growth.⁷ These middle-skill jobs are expected to account for nearly half of all new jobs.
- The state's labor supply is ranked third in the country as part of its recent recognition as the #1 Best State for Business.⁸
- The Provo-Orem area is among the top three regions that have led the country in percentage of job growth in both healthcare and IT jobs requiring community college training since 2001.⁹
- The Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce projected by 2018, 66 percent of all jobs in Utah would require some type of postsecondary training.¹⁰ This led to the state of Utah setting an aspirational attainment goal of 66 percent of Utah adults having a degree or certificate by the year 2020.

Benefits of Higher Education

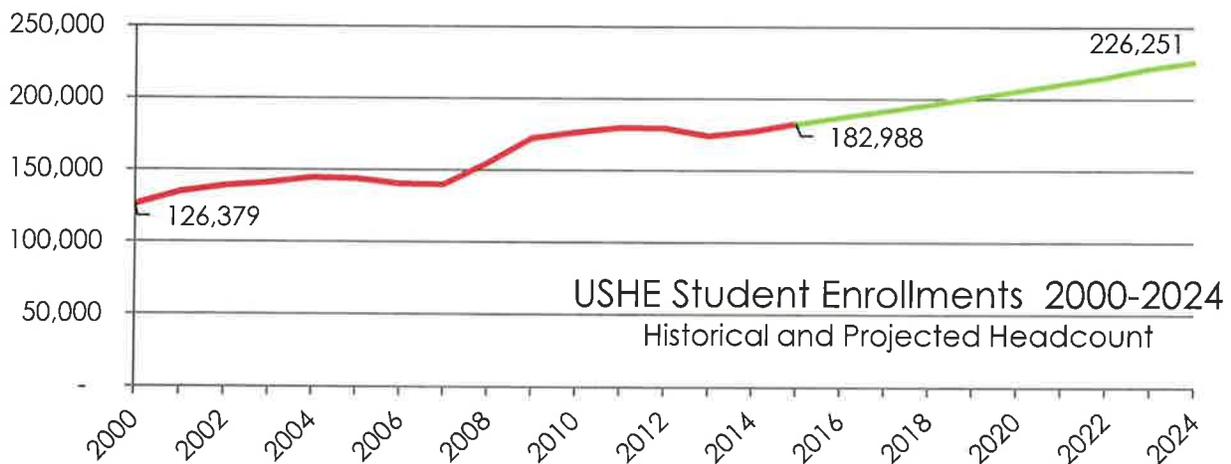
Envision Utah, a Utah-based public-private partnership focused on long-term growth strategies, recently concluded from its statewide survey of 50,000 respondents, "Utahns believe education allows them and their children to have more opportunities, earn a better living, and achieve a higher quality of life. They also view education as a key to developing a better, safer community with better citizens."¹¹ Beyond economic benefits, a college education is the primary factor that leads to a high quality of life, vibrant communities, and stable family life for Utah's population:

- **Economic Stability:** Utahns with a bachelor’s degree will earn 40 percent more annually, with estimated lifetime earnings \$830,000 higher¹² than those with a high school diploma—an approximate 33 percent return on investment for a college education. USHE graduates over the next decade will add more than \$150 billion to the state’s economy.
- **Quality of Life:** A more educated population improves the overall quality of life through reduced crime, reduced dependence on public assistance programs,¹³ increased volunteerism,¹⁴ and increased family stability. According to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, 74 percent of adults living in intergenerational poverty lack an education beyond high school.¹⁵ A college certificate or degree is a critical stepping-stone to helping families break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.
- **Individual and Public Health:** According to a recent study, education is now considered “a key element of U.S. health policy, and a major concern for current and future physicians.”⁸ Such benefits are not only good for the individual, but result in an overall benefit to a state’s economy¹⁶ by reducing costs to public assistance programs and costs related to incarceration. Put simply, the higher the level of education, the greater the individual income. With that income, there is greater likelihood of accessing quality healthcare, more time to address health-related needs, and greater knowledge and ability to monitor one’s health.

The Challenges are Real

Capacity to serve 50,000+ new students by 2025

The number of students enrolling at a Utah’s public colleges and universities is projected to increase by an estimated 50,000 (headcount) by 2025. As the state works to increase the percentage of Utahns who participate in higher education, serving a larger number of new students will make the challenge even greater.

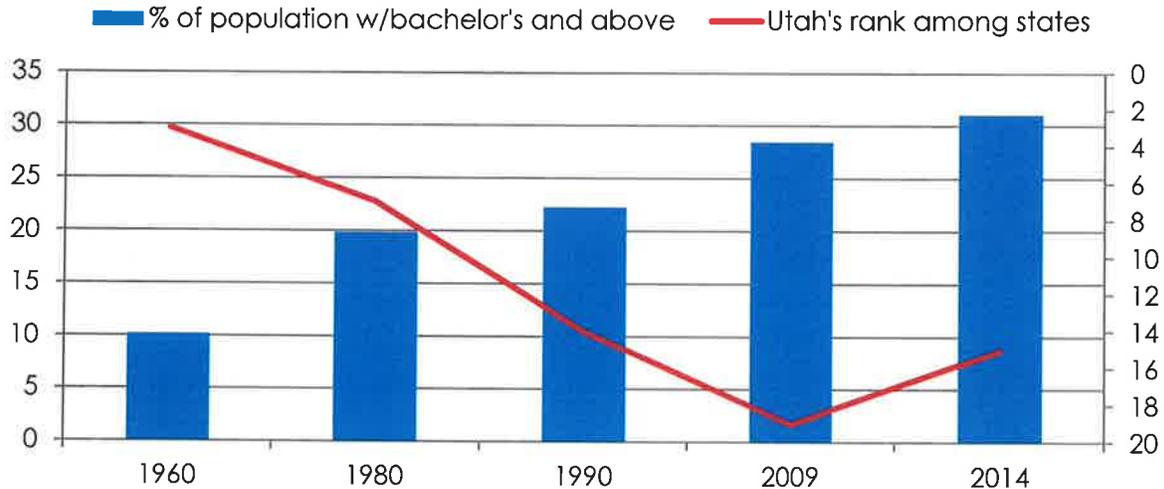


With the number of students continuing to climb, Utah’s public colleges and universities face significant infrastructure and facilities challenges, as aging facilities need replacement and

additional buildings are necessary to meet the increase in on-campus students. Online-only courses and degrees have rapidly expanded in recent years. In fact, USHE institutions provide over 80 degrees and certificates entirely online. However, most USHE students who use online-only courses primarily enroll to augment the rest of their on-campus schedule—only 3 percent of all USHE students enroll solely online. Such patterns reinforce the need for physical infrastructure to keep pace with growth over the next decade.

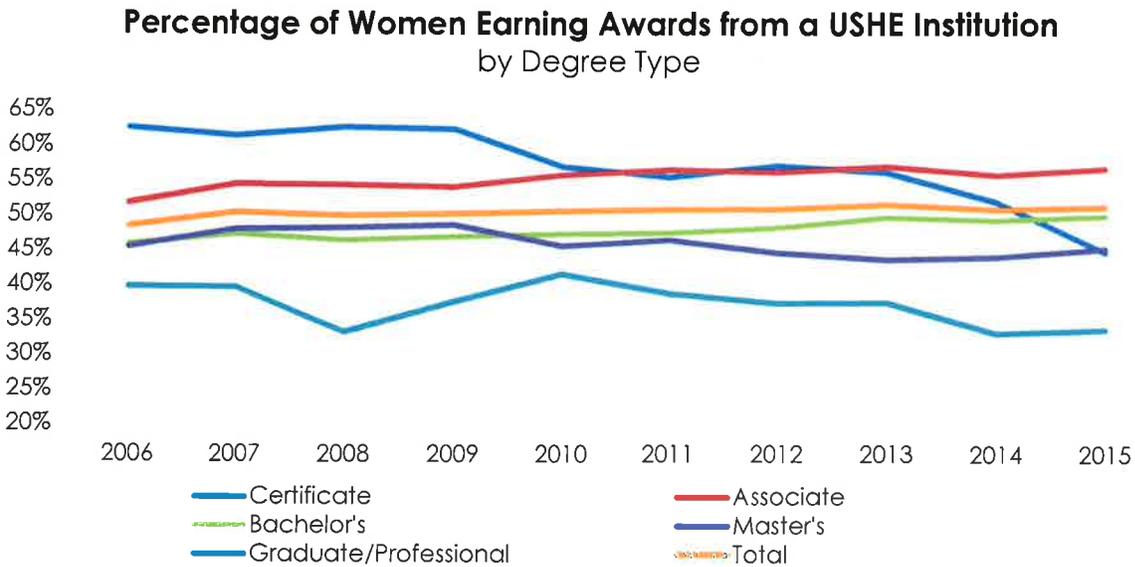
Increasing educational attainment for all Utahns

Despite the projected growth in student enrollment and the increased number of college graduates over the past several decades, Utah has fallen behind in higher education achievement relative to the rest of the nation. Over the past fifty years, Utah’s ranking among states dropped from third to as low as 19th for individuals with bachelor’s degrees or above in its population. In the most recent data (2014), Utah’s ranking has improved to 15th in the nation for bachelor’s degree and above, but it is still 10 percentage points below the top state.¹⁷



Utah higher education should serve the population of Utah: Enrollments and graduates should reflect the population proportionately for income groups, genders, and ethnic minorities. Currently, there is a stark higher education achievement gap¹⁸ between income groups¹⁹ and also between majority/minority communities in Utah.²⁰ As more first generation college students come to college campuses in the coming years, these students will generally require greater engagement and support to prepare for, progress through, and complete college. The goal is for participation and graduation rates to reflect the total population of Utah.

Nationally, women are far outpacing men in higher education achievement. Utah is closer to the goal of graduates mirroring the population as much as possible—50 percent women, 50 percent men. However, more women graduates tend to be at the associate degree level with fewer graduates at the graduate level. This has been consistent over time with some improvement in the percentage of women earning associate and bachelor degrees. Continued attention is needed to ensure Utah women have the same opportunities and support as men to achieve higher educational attainment, specifically graduate degrees.²¹



Utahns marry²² and start families²³ at a younger age than the nation as a whole. Seventy-two percent of U.S. college students work while enrolled in college, and more than half of those work 20 hours per week or more.²⁴ Working while pursuing a degree or certificate is also a reality for large numbers of Utah students. This highlights the need for varying scheduling options, online courses, and drop-in childcare to make higher education more accessible to Utah's students.

Eight out of ten Utah high school graduates who go to college attend one of Utah's public colleges or universities, making the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) the primary workforce pipeline in the state. The state's economic vitality and quality of life rests heavily on the ability of USHE institutions to support their students in earning a degree or certificate.

Critical Questions for Utah's Future

State and higher education leaders must address two critical questions:

- Will Utah build upon recent successes and more fully become a state of opportunity and a prosperous leader in the global economy?
- Or, is Utah satisfied with being in the middle of the pack among states in the percentage of its population with a college education?
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How state and higher education leaders answer these questions will define the role of public higher education in helping Utahns realize their dreams of a prosperous future for generations to come.

The Plan: A Statewide Strategy to Maximize Opportunity

Clearly, Utah must increase the proportion of its population with a college education to build state prosperity into the future. This can only be accomplished by ensuring higher education remains accessible and affordable for Utahns; guiding students toward graduating in a timely manner; and giving students the opportunity to discover, learn, and engage with the communities, employers, and the world around them through state-of-the-art technology and instructional design.

Recognizing these crucial crossroads and the role higher education can play in ensuring Utah sets a path for a successful tomorrow, the Board of Regents and the Utah System of Higher Education have developed a ten-year strategic plan, which focuses on critical goals, proven strategies and needed investments in higher education.

Strategic Objectives:	Affordable Participation Timely Completion Innovative Discovery
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I. Affordable Participation

Goal: Increase the number of Utahns who decide to access, are prepared for, and succeed in higher education.

Access and Participation

Approximately half of Utah high school graduates enter college within one year of high school graduation. Within seven years, this increases to 70 percent.²⁵ As a percent of population, Utah has a larger share of young people under age 18 than any other state, at 30.9 percent compared to 23.3 percent for the U.S. Utah has the highest birth rate in the nation, is the fourth-fastest growing state in population,²⁶ and has the seventh-fastest growing economy.²⁷ Assuming just the current college participation rate, the number of students seeking a higher education in USHE is expected to grow by nearly 50,000 students in the next ten years,²⁸ if there is the capacity to serve them.

There is a growing gap, however, in participation between ethnic/racial majority and minority students, as well as between low-income students and those who are not low-income:

- While student enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students in USHE institutions has increased 207 percent in the past decade—the fastest growing ethnic minority—overall college participation among Utah Hispanic/Latino high school students consistently lags the state average by approximately 20 percent.²⁹
- The college completion rate among ethnic minority students in Utah is approximately half that of white students.³⁰

- The percentage of K-12 students on free and reduced student lunch has increased from 33.2 percent in 2000-01³¹ to 59 percent in 2012-13.³² The college participation rate of students on free and reduced student lunch is approximately 20 percent lower than for those not on free and reduced lunch.³³

Unless a larger percentage of the rapidly growing minority segment of the state's population participates in higher education, the state educational attainment levels will fall in relation to other states, with severe consequences for the state's economy. Increasing college participation rates, especially among underserved and first-generation students, requires greater investment in student support.

In addition to the challenges of engaging and assisting students without prior family knowledge of college, USHE institutions are already dealing with capacity challenges, having added almost 60,000 new students since 2000—the equivalent of the 2014-15 student bodies at Utah State University and Weber State University combined. It will be a significant challenge to grow capacity academically (enough faculty, course sections, and support staff), physically (capital facilities, infrastructure), and virtually (information technology resources) to maintain this significant enrollment growth. This will take additional state tax fund support as well as continued efficiencies within USHE institutions to keep higher education in Utah both accessible and affordable. (Detailed budget projections are included on pages 11-13.)

College Preparation

In recent years, the Utah State Board of Education, responsible for K-12 education, has increased learning standards to better prepare students for college, career and life in an increasingly complex world. Preparation for college, particularly in math and English, enables students to progress in college without spending time “catching-up” to college-level work through remedial courses.

Over the past several years, the Utah State Board of Regents has developed outreach programs via its *StepUp Utah* initiative to encourage K-12 students to see themselves as college material and prepare for higher education academically and financially. StepUp Utah has partnered with 27 of the 41 state school districts. StepUp Utah programs include the legislatively-funded Regents' Scholarship, the Utah Scholars Initiative, Concurrent Enrollment, a statewide conference for school counselors, and events throughout the state for Utah parents and students.

In addition, in 2014, the Board of Regents adopted specific math recommendations³⁴ for high school students preparing for college to help set clear expectations for success in completing a college degree. The Board of Regents and the Utah System of Higher Education recommend that high school students (grades 9-12) complete:

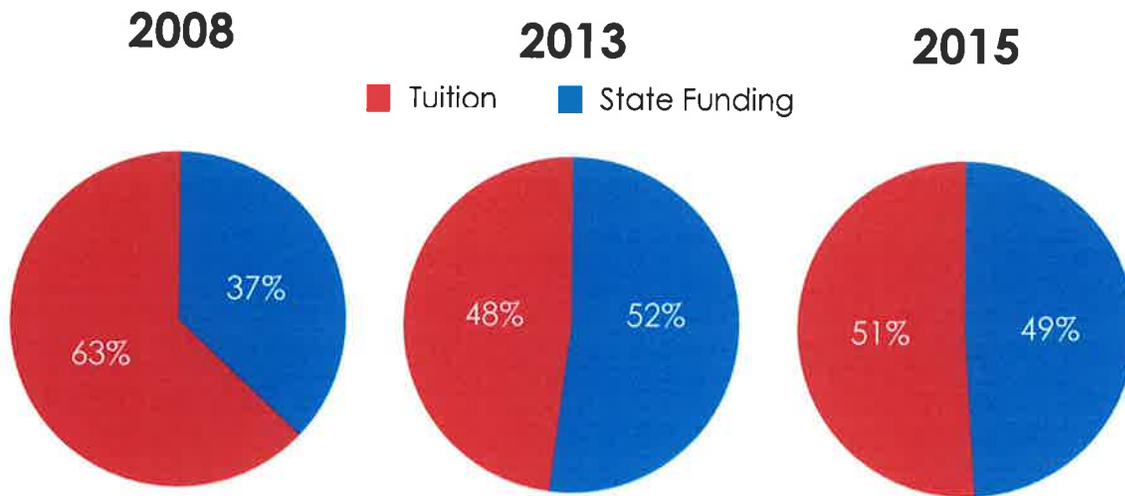
- Four years of math (Math I, II, III and something beyond Math III such as Pre-calculus, Calculus, AP Statistics, or Math 1030, 1040, or 1050 through Concurrent Enrollment).
- Four years of English
- Three and one half years of social science

- Three years of lab-based science (specifically biology, chemistry and physics)
- Two years of a world language

The Board of Regents and the Utah System of Higher Education support and encourage further efforts in K-12 to increase college level academic preparation.

Affordability

Tuition at Utah’s four-year public institutions is the third lowest in the U.S.³⁵ Even so, affordability is an issue of concern. State spending per student in USHE decreased since 2008, reflecting the revenue shortfalls during the 2009-11 recession at the same time enrollments surged. As a result, more of the cost of a higher education is now paid through student tuition. Since the recession, state support has increased, but as enrollments and costs also increase it will be crucial that state support keeps pace.



Cost is a particular concern for Utahns given larger family sizes (3.12 persons per household, compared with 2.63 nationally)³⁶ and thus the likelihood of more students attending college from the same family. Continued state support, covering more than half of the cost of students’ postsecondary education, is critical to maintain college affordability in Utah.

Taking Action to Assure Affordable Participation

→ ***Improve student financial support.***

- Encourage family financial planning and saving for college, especially in taking advantage of the benefits offered by the Utah Educational Savings Plan—one of the top-ranked 529 college savings plans in the nation.
- Increase efforts to inform students and parents of the opportunities for financial aid including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Encourage prudent use of student loans to support timely completion and more rapid integration into the workforce at higher wage levels.

- Continue support of effective institutional need-based aid and assistance programs as well as strategic use of scholarships and tuition waivers.
 - Continued expansion of the StepUp Utah initiative through programs that improve college preparation among K-12 students.
 - Maintain strong state funding support from the Governor and State Legislature as a primary funding source for higher education, maintaining or improving the current inverse relationship to tuition.³⁷
- *Increase state support for capacity and quality improvement.*
- Expand academic, technological, and physical infrastructure within USHE to meet the needs of anticipated growth in demand for postsecondary education, which cannot be met with the current infrastructure.
 - Leverage outside support from education advocacy groups, business leaders, and elected officials to advocate for the needed expansion to meet student demand and maintain quality of the educational experience.
- *Encourage college readiness with the goal that every Utah high school graduate is prepared for college.*
- USHE can help support K-12 leaders, administrators, and teachers to create a college-going culture in their schools:
 - Improve support to first-generation, economically disadvantaged, and returning adults with targeted outreach efforts and partnerships with organizations focused on improving college access for these communities.
 - Implement specific K-16 partnership initiatives that: 1) encourage college readiness in key subjects, especially math, 2) inform K-12 administrators and counselors of the USHE course recommendations that lead to college readiness, and 3) reinforce effective college access and preparation initiatives in high schools and junior high schools.
 - Improve “college knowledge” and ease of access among K-12 students through on-campus experiences, concurrent enrollment and transferability, and streamlined transition to college through the admissions and onboarding processes at USHE institutions.

II. Timely Completion

Goal: Increase the percentage of students who persist in and graduate from higher education.

Increasing the number of students who successfully complete a degree or certificate in a timely manner has been an explicit goal of the Board of Regents for nearly a decade. In July 2013, the Board passed a *College Completion* resolution, identifying five specific strategies proven to increase college success and graduation rates. The Presidents and their administrations and faculty have taken the Board’s charge seriously and have been implementing these strategies

and annually updating goals for each. The Board should continue to monitor institutional progress toward each of these goals. The five completion strategies are:

1. Establish 30 credits per year as the normal full-time course load for students (15 credits per semester if enrolling for two semesters per year, or 30 over all semesters in a year). Research clearly indicates that a course load of 30 credits a year leads to increased math and reading proficiency in college³⁸ as well as improved ability to earn a college credential.³⁹ Institutions will promote the recommended course load and ensure their own top scholarship requirements define 15 credit hours/semester as full time.
2. Maintain plateau tuition levels with a focus on 12 to 15 credit hours to help students maximize their tuition dollars and their time. Institutions will promote the advantages of taking 15 credit hours per semester or 30 hours per year as a way to complete a degree on time.⁴⁰
3. Create semester-by-semester degree program maps with specific recommended courses each semester and make them available to current and potential students. Institutions will ensure they are updated regularly to help students stay on track to finish their degrees on time and better enable institutions to maximize course scheduling availability for students.
4. Encourage students to enroll in an appropriate math course in their first year in college; transition students from developmental to credit-bearing math within three semesters; market Math 1030/1040/1050 as a preferred concurrent enrollment option for high school students who are prepared to succeed in college math.
5. Implement reverse transfer/stackable credentials where feasible.⁴¹

Continued implementation of these strategies will enable more students to achieve their goals of earning a certificate or degree. Utah leads the nation in “some college, no degree,⁴²” but Utah should aspire to lead the nation, as it once did, in the percentage of its population *with* a college degree. Wage data and numerous state and national studies are clear that the greatest economic return comes from completing a certificate or degree rather than amassing college credits alone.

The standard graduation rate is the percent of students who complete within 150 percent of time (six years for a four-year degree, three years for a two-year degree). For USHE as a whole, currently two out of five (39 percent) Utah students complete a four-year degree within six years; just over half (51 percent) complete within eight years. National data are clear that the longer it takes to complete a degree, the more expensive completion becomes and the less likely one is to finish.⁴³

Taking Action to Assure Timely Completion

- *Continue to review and report USHE institutions’ long-term completion goals.⁴⁴ Support institutional strategies proven to improve timely student completion.*
- *Ensure consistent articulation and transferability of credit earned in prior learning assessments, competency-based education, concurrent enrollment and general education.*

→ *Provide ease of access to financial aid opportunities and appropriate course taking options, and facilitate student experiences that encourage academic rigor, peer-to-peer support, and workforce opportunity.*

III. Innovative Discovery

Goal: Encourage innovation as a core value at each USHE institution, in keeping with its distinct mission. USHE is a “knowledge enterprise,” engaged in the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

As a “knowledge enterprise,” higher education provides students an opportunity to discover and learn—and become lifelong learners. At its core is the creation and dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of its students and society.

A recent survey of employers commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) found that employers are highly focused on innovation, and employees need a broader set of skills than in the past, prioritizing critical thinking, communications, and complex problem solving skills.⁴⁵ Each USHE institution seeks to help students on a journey of discovery as they learn more about themselves, their individual potential, the society in which they live, how to be a productive and contributing members of society, specific skills and knowledge, and critical analytical skills. Knowledge enriches the mind and soul. Practically speaking, these skills have never been more important than they are today in 21st century America and the globally competitive economy.

Utah is fortunate to have among its public higher education institutions two Research I universities that emphasize discovery and its application for the advancement of society. In 2014-15, USHE institutions received over \$400 million in grants, primarily for research purposes at the University of Utah and Utah State University. These funds reflect the critical role research plays in the state’s economy, as well as in the quality of instruction and the experiential opportunities for students.

At every institution in USHE, faculty must stay current in their fields, and students are taught not only how to master the task at hand but how to continue to grow intellectually and contribute as active citizens. USHE institutions with open-enrollment missions provide students of all levels of preparation an opportunity to better their lives through education and training. Open access institutions embrace a community college role and career and technical education to help prepare students for entry-level employment.

In this changing and competitive world, higher education must also be innovative to leverage state and student resources to fulfill its critical roles. This includes continuing to find ways to provide a quality higher education efficiently and effectively. Innovation is evident at each institution in changes to delivery methods, placing new emphasis on student engagement and experiential learning, as well as keeping current in new developments in a myriad of academic disciplines.

While USHE has a well-articulated general education curriculum with common course numbering and annual meetings of faculty leaders from the general education disciplines, continued efforts are needed. These include encouraging innovative instructional design and pedagogy, consistency in quality of general education courses, and embracing technological opportunities to improve student learning.

Taking Action to Achieve Innovative Discovery

- *Implement best practices in models of teaching and learning. This assures a clear definition of learning outcomes that foster a culture of innovation, discovery, collaboration and lifelong learning beyond the college realm.*
- *Emphasize the mission of the USHE research universities in the transformative role of cutting-edge research and knowledge creation, recruiting of top research talent, and research focused on outcomes that improve society, attempt to solve major issues and encourage innovative commercialization of research efforts.*
- *Leverage efforts of USHE institutions to meet the workforce demands of Utah's economy through applied research, industry partnerships and degree programs explicitly established to meet workforce needs.*

Investing in the Strategic Objectives of the Utah System of Higher Education

As public higher education institutions, USHE receives substantial support from state taxpayers as appropriated by the Utah Legislature. Like colleges and universities across the nation, over the past twenty years more of the cost burden has shifted from state taxpayers to students, in the form of tuition. Continued state support to prevent further cost shifts is critical to keeping higher education affordable for Utahns. As the number of students grows, additional resources will be needed just to keep the current balance in place.

These state investments will protect affordable access by building capacity, minimizing tuition increases, and increasing the quality of the student experience.

Each year as required by state law, the Board of Regents approves a unified budget request for the Utah System of Higher Education and recommends this budget to the Governor and Legislature. The following is a ten-year projection of the estimated costs to implement this plan, knowing the actual budget recommendation will vary from year to year based on the most critical needs. It includes the following elements:

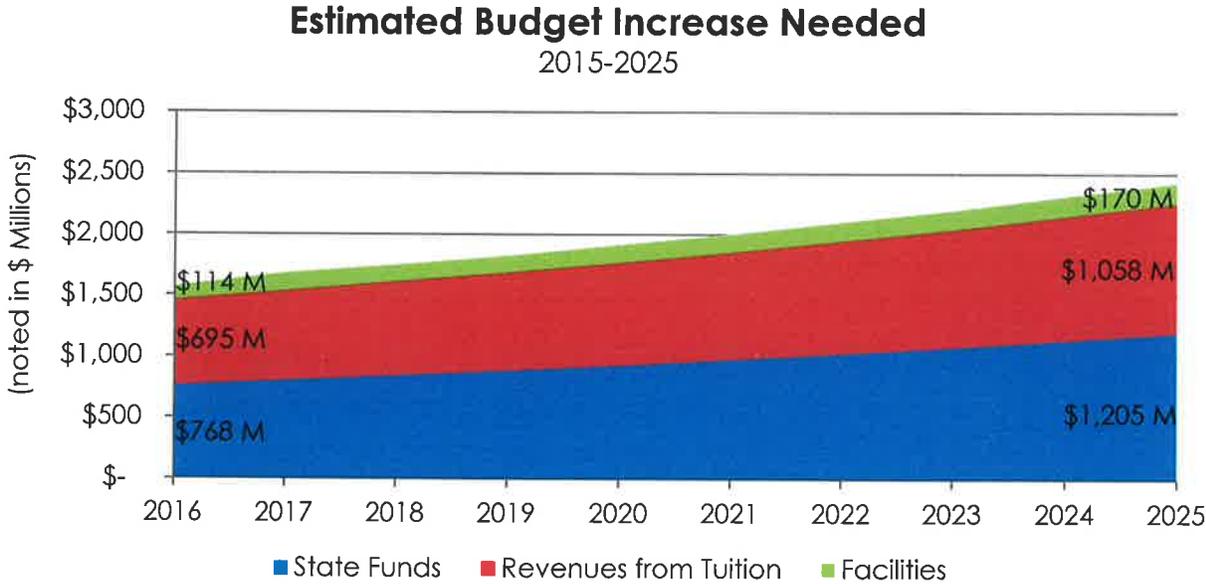
- Employee compensation and benefits annual increases to maintain competitiveness for talent based on the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). (More than eighty percent of USHE costs are personnel-related.)

- Accommodating the projected increase in student enrollments estimated over ten years without increasing reliance on tuition.
- Accommodating capacity increases as participation increases.
- Increases in utilization of information technology equipment and support.
- Increases in operations and maintenance, utilities, and other mandatory costs.
- Capital development to replace aging facilities and for expansion of new facilities.
- Performance funding.
- Growth in the number of students receiving the Regents' Scholarship.
- A deduction in projected costs for increased operational efficiency within USHE.

Using the approved USHE enrollment forecasts of the next ten fiscal years, costs associated with an average 2.8 percent annual increase in students would be sustained via three primary sources:

1. Appropriated state funds for ongoing operations.
2. Tuition paid by those additional students enrolled at a USHE institution due to growth.
3. Appropriated state tax funds for expansion, replacement and maintenance of facilities.

The following chart shows the required annual budgetary increases to sustain projected growth after factoring in a 5 percent overall cost reduction due to efficiencies achieved through areas such as enhanced use of technology, improved program delivery, and increased rates of student completing a degree or certificate.



- Over the next decade, the USHE overall budget would need an annual average increase of:
- 5.2 percent in appropriated state funds for operations, including capacity for enrollment growth, compensation, increased participation in statewide scholarships, operation and maintenance of facilities, and information technology. This calls for a consistent annual investment at 30 percent above the 10-year historical average increase of 4 percent and minimizes the need for tuition rate increases.

- 4.8 percent in overall revenues related to tuition (combination of enrollment growth and minimal tuition rate increases).

Continued state investment in capital facilities:

- Averaging \$150.5 million per year.
 - Over the past twenty years, the Legislature has provided funding an average \$82 million per year for updated or new capital facilities (2015 dollars). To meet the needs of a growing population of students and replace and update old infrastructure, it is estimated that an average of \$150.5 million per year will be needed over the next decade.

These estimates for dollars needed are based on the 2015-16 proportion of state tax funds for operations, tuition revenues, and the state funds requested for 2015-16 capital development needs projected over time.

The Return on Investment of the Strategic Objectives of the Utah System of Higher Education

Higher Education and Economic Development

A college education is the primary factor that increases wages and improves economic mobility, making higher education one of the most important policy considerations for economic development. Increased wages that come with attainment of a degree or certificate or degree beyond high school, and the resulting retention and attraction of businesses and industry due to a more educated populace, are the most significant economic contributions higher education provides to the state. This is apparent in many national studies. For instance, the Milken Institute found increases in educational attainment beyond high school are associated with increases in GDP and wages in communities.⁴⁶ USHE graduates earning a college degree or certificate over the next decade will contribute more than \$150 billion to the state's economy:

- **\$132 Billion in Increased Wages:** 2014-15 USHE graduates who earned a bachelor's degree will earn 55 percent more in their first year than those with just a high school degree (according to U.S. Census data). Collectively, that is more than \$370 million in increased wages for Utahns in a single year.⁴⁷ By the end of 2025, USHE graduates will earn more than \$4 billion dollars in *increased* first year wages alone above those with only a high school diploma—resulting in \$132 billion dollars in *increased* wages over 30 years.
- **\$17 Billion Increase in Contributions to Utah's Tax Base:** 2014-15 graduates will contribute an estimated \$47.5 million in state taxes with their newfound earnings their first year working⁴⁸—approximately half of the year's estimated growth in the state tax base.⁴⁹ By the end of 2025, total taxes from the first year of just the *increased* portion of wages earned by a USHE graduate will exceed \$560 million—resulting in \$17 billion in contributions to Utah's tax base over 30 years.

- **\$26 Billion Increase in Indirect Economic Activity:** With increased wages comes increased spending and saving capacity in Utah's economy. This will generate an additional \$26 billion in economic activity in the state's economy.
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Conclusion

The path forward is clear: Utah must make higher education a funding priority in order for the state to become a prosperous leader in the economy of tomorrow. A higher education is necessary for individuals to succeed in the 21st century workforce, and having an educated population is necessary for Utah to continue on its trajectory of economic growth and prosperity. Increasing college attainment in Utah will ensure individual Utahns not only have more successful economic outcomes and a higher quality of life, but will help provide ongoing funding for state burdens such as transportation, healthcare and air quality.

In order for more Utahns to access and complete a college degree or certificate, USHE must have the resources to keep the cost of college affordable, to increase capacity for the necessary jump in student enrollment, and to provide the student support needed to engage and advise students.

So, will Utah realize its potential as a state of opportunity? By making key investments in higher education, the future for Utah in every metric—economic, well-being, health, prosperity—is bright.

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