

1 **Higher Education Alignment**

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Karen M. Peterson**

Senate Sponsor: Evan J. Vickers

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3 **LONG TITLE**4 **General Description:**5 This bill directs the alignment of the system of higher education into regions for vertical  
6 and horizontal integration.7 **Highlighted Provisions:**

8 This bill:

9 ▶ requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to:  
10     • organize the institutions of higher education within the state's system of higher  
11 education into geographic regions;  
12     • report to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee; and  
13     • ensure certain products of horizontal and vertical integration within the institutional  
14 regions.15 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

16 None

17 **Other Special Clauses:**

18 None

19 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**20 **AMENDS:**21     **53H-3-602**, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session,  
22     Chapter 8

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23 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*24     Section 1. Section **53H-3-602** is amended to read:25     **53H-3-602 . Establishment of institutional roles and general courses of study --**26 **Regional alignment.**27     (1) Except as institutional roles are specifically assigned by the Legislature, the board:  
28         (a) shall establish and define the roles of the various institutions of higher education; and  
29         (b) shall, within each institution of higher education's primary role, prescribe the general

31 course of study to be offered at the institution of higher education, including for:

32 (i) research universities, which provide undergraduate, graduate, and research  
33 programs and include:

34 (A) the University of Utah; and

35 (B) Utah State University;

36 (ii) regional universities, which provide career and technical education,  
37 undergraduate associate and baccalaureate programs, and select master's degree  
38 programs to fill regional demands and include:

39 (A) Weber State University;

40 (B) Southern Utah University;

41 (C) Utah Tech University; and

42 (D) Utah Valley University;

43 (iii) comprehensive community colleges, which provide associate programs and  
44 include:

45 (A) Salt Lake Community College; and

46 (B) Snow College; and

47 (iv) technical colleges and degree-granting institutions that provide technical  
48 education, and include:

49 (A) each technical college; and

50 (B) the degree-granting institutions described in Section 53H-3-608.

51 (2)(a) Except for the University of Utah, and subject to Subsection (2)(b), each  
52 institution of higher education described in Subsections (1)(b)(i) through (iii) has  
53 career and technical education included in the institution of higher education's  
54 primary role.

55 (b) The board shall determine the extent to which an institution described in Subsection  
56 (2)(a) provides career and technical education within the institution's primary role.

57 (3) The board shall further clarify each institution of higher education's primary role by  
58 clarifying:

59 (a) the level of program that the institution of higher education generally offers, in  
60 accordance with Subsection 53H-3-603(3);

61 (b) broad fields that are within the institution of higher education's mission; and

62 (c) any special characteristics of the institution of higher education, such as being a land  
63 grant university.

64 (4) The board shall:

65       (a)(i) organize the institutions described in Subsection (1) into regions that include at  
66       least one degree-granting institution and one technical college in each region; and  
67       (ii) report to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee by August 2026,  
68       regarding the organization described in Subsection (4)(a)(i);  
69       (b) facilitate the horizontal and vertical integration of the institutions of higher education  
70       in accordance with this Subsection (4);  
71       (c) ensure that the vertical integration of institutions described in Subsection (4)(a)  
72       provides:  
73        (i) articulated programs that guarantee specific courses or credits transfer through  
74       course equivalencies for general education, majors, and minors, making the  
75       transfer process predictable and reducing credit loss;  
76        (ii) stackable programs that sequentially build upon prior learning to reflect an  
77       accumulated set of knowledge and skills;  
78        (iii) integrated admission and enrollment;  
79        (iv) integrated student services; and  
80        (v) opportunities to leverage shared administrative services; and  
81       (d) in establishing and defining missions and roles under this section, identify  
82       opportunities for cross-regional and statewide horizontal integration of institutions  
83       described in Subsection (4)(a) that promote financial efficiencies and quality and  
84       attainable programming by leveraging and aligning:  
85        (i) shared academic programs;  
86        (ii) academic program and degree specialization; and  
87        (iii) for research institutions, research opportunities.

88       Section 2. **Effective Date.**

89       This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.