

Higher Education Alignment
2026 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Karen M. Peterson
Senate Sponsor: Evan J. Vickers

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill directs the alignment of the system of higher education into regions for vertical and horizontal integration.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to:
 - organize the institutions of higher education within the state's system of higher education into geographic regions;
 - report to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee; and
 - ensure certain products of horizontal and vertical integration within the institutional regions.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53H-3-602, as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 8

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53H-3-602** is amended to read:

**53H-3-602 . Establishment of institutional roles and general courses of study --
Regional alignment.**

- (1) Except as institutional roles are specifically assigned by the Legislature, the board:
- (a) shall establish and define the roles of the various institutions of higher education; and
 - (b) shall, within each institution of higher education's primary role, prescribe the general

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

- (i) research universities, which provide undergraduate, graduate, and research programs and include:
 - (A) the University of Utah; and
 - (B) Utah State University;
- (ii) regional universities, which provide career and technical education, undergraduate associate and baccalaureate programs, and select master's degree programs to fill regional demands and include:
 - (A) Weber State University;
 - (B) Southern Utah University;
 - (C) Utah Tech University; and
 - (D) Utah Valley University;
- (iii) comprehensive community colleges, which provide associate programs and include:
 - (A) Salt Lake Community College; and
 - (B) Snow College; and
- (iv) technical colleges and degree-granting institutions that provide technical education, and include:
 - (A) each technical college; and
 - (B) the degree-granting institutions described in Section 53H-3-608.

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

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

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

- (a) the level of program that the institution of higher education generally offers, in accordance with Subsection 53H-3-603(3);
- (b) broad fields that are within the institution of higher education's mission; and
- (c) any special characteristics of the institution of higher education, such as being a land grant university.

(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.