Utah System of Technical Colleges 10-year Goals

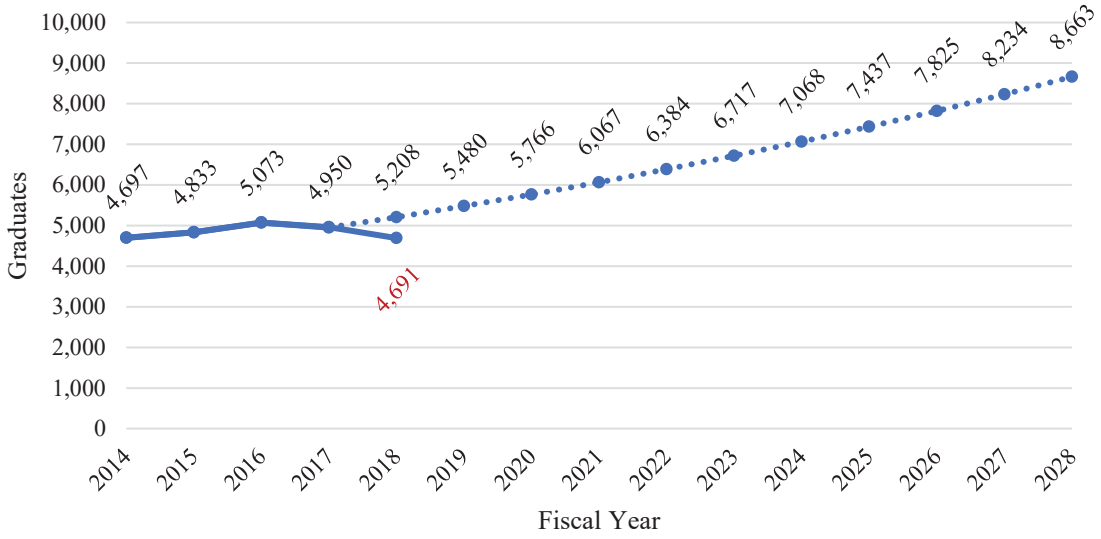
In late 2017 the Utah System of Technical Colleges Board of Trustees established the following 10-year goals and associated metrics to assess system-wide performance, using 2017 as the baseline for all future improvements. In the graphics that follow, previously established goals are shown using dotted lines, while actual performance is denoted with solid lines.

Please note that UTECH Policy 205, Student Enrollment and Outcome Reporting, underwent major revisions during FY 2017 in preparation for reporting college and system-wide student data. Revisions included definitional and operational changes, resulting in numbers that may not be comparable to data reported in years past. Where data prior to 2017 are not comparable thereafter, care has been taken to explain why.

Goal #1: Provide every student the opportunity to obtain quality career and technical education resulting in a postsecondary credential

- **Metric 1A:** Increase the number of postsecondary students graduating with a Board-approved technical college postsecondary certificate by 75% by 2028.

Figure 1: UTECH Postsecondary Graduates, FY 2014 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



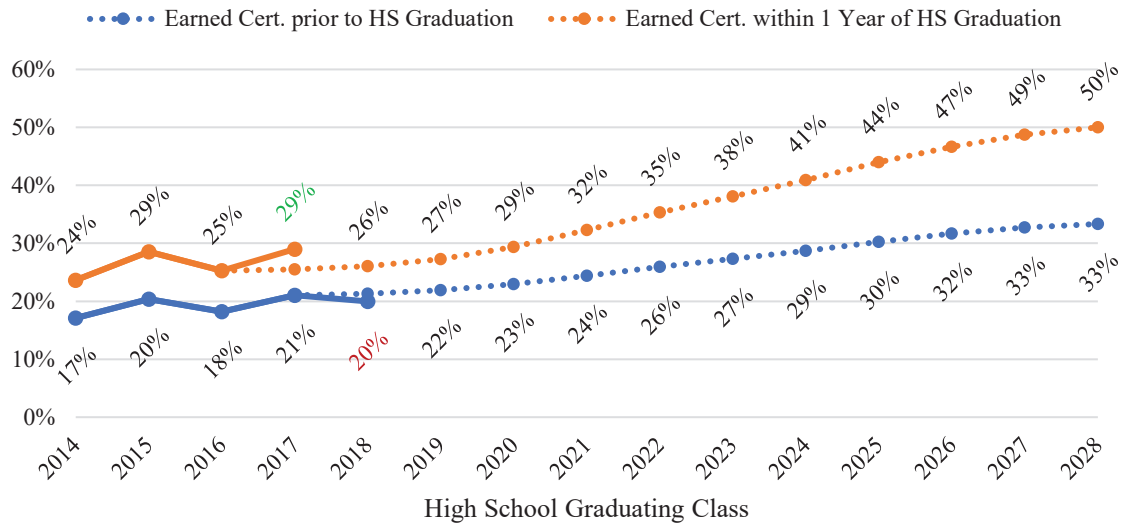
Postsecondary graduates from FY 2014-16 were reported in prior reports published by the Board of Trustees. Under old policy, students were classified as completers upon receipt of a postsecondary certificate, regardless of some students' statuses as being still enrolled. Now, students are classified as graduates or non-graduates only upon exiting their programs. This change results in a decline in graduates from FY 2016-17. The further decline from FY 2017-18 is believed to be consequent to the colleges discontinuing short-term programs in favor of longer programs. In fact, the system's weighted average program length increased from 508 to 564 hours from FY 2017-18, an increase of 11%. Increased certificate-seeking membership hours and headcounts (up 6% and 5%, respectively)

in longer programs indicate that students are in the pipeline; it is anticipated that graduates will increase in FY 2019.

- **Metric 1B:** Increase the proportion of enrolled secondary students graduating with a postsecondary certificate prior to high school completion to 33% by 2028.

- **Metric 1C:** Increase the proportion of enrolled secondary students graduating with a postsecondary certificate prior to or within one year following high school completion to 50% by 2028.

Figure 2: UTECH Secondary Graduation Rates, FY 2014 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



Among technical college students belonging to the high school graduating class of 2018, 20% earned a postsecondary certificate prior to high school graduation. To identify this cohort, technical colleges' prior years' data were analyzed to identify high school freshmen enrolling in FY 2015, sophomores in FY 2016, juniors in FY 2017, and seniors in FY 2018. This way, if a student attends a technical college as a sophomore but does not return in subsequent years, the student's outcome (for better or worse) is still captured in the graph above.

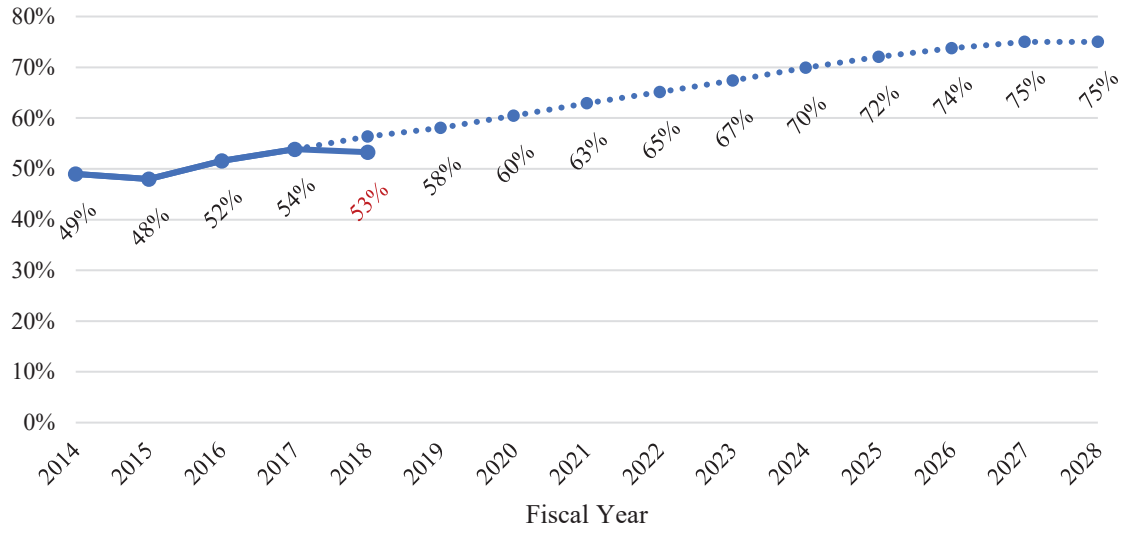
To calculate the percentage of students earning a certificate prior to or within one year of high school graduation, we look at the members of a high school graduating cohort that enrolled at a technical college, checking to see if they received an award in the year after grade 12. Note that while some students may fail to graduate from high school on time, UTECH is limited in reclassifying them in a different high school graduation cohort. Rate calculations are based on UTECH data only, independent of the actions or decisions of local education authorities. While 21% of technical college students from the class of 2017 earned a certificate prior to high school graduation, an additional 8% earned an award in the year following high school completion.

In FY 2018 the graduation rate for high school students declined slightly from the prior year. Again, this is believed to be a function of the colleges' increasing program lengths. However, the technical

colleges surpassed their goal for graduating students one year after high school completion. 29% of secondary enrollees from the class of 2017 have earned an accredited postsecondary award.

- **Metric 1D:** Increase the percentage of economically disadvantaged students graduating with a technical college certificate to 75% by 2028

Figure 3: UTECH Under-served Student Graduation Rates, FY 2014 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



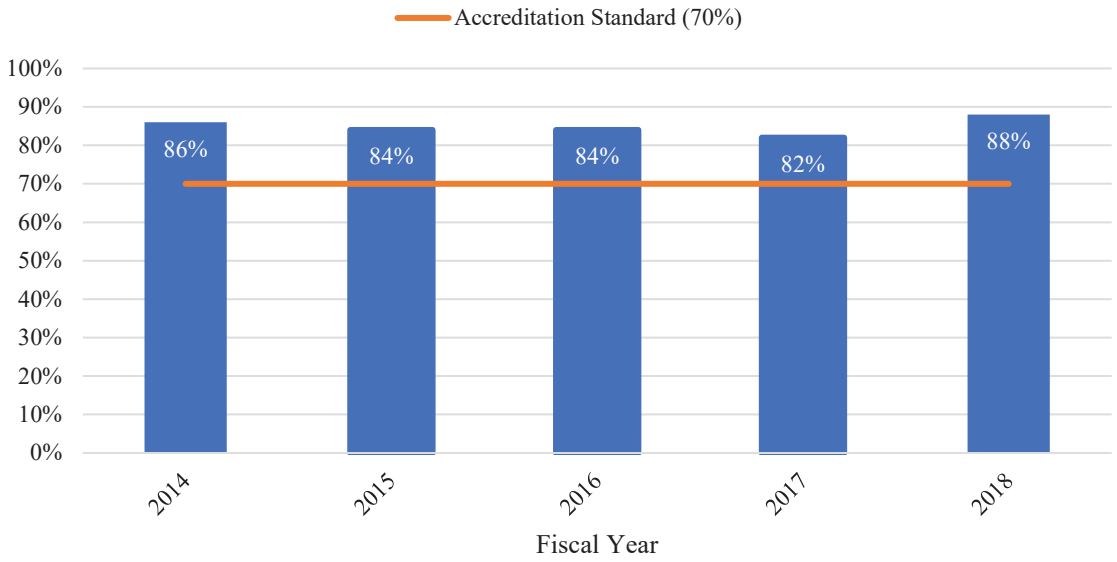
Under-served students are those of ethnic/racial minority status, students receiving Pell Grants or who are sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Utah Department of Workforce Services, students with a disability, or those identified as single parents, displaced homemakers, economically disadvantaged, or of limited English proficiency.

Technical colleges failed to meet their goal of graduating 56% of under-served students in FY 2018, coming in at just over 53%.

Goal #2: Meet critical economic and employer needs

- **Metric 2A:** Continue to achieve placement rates for completers of certificate programs that meet or exceed accreditation standards by 10-20% annually. (Placement is defined as related employment, military service, or continuing education.)

Figure 4: UTECH Placement Rates, FY 2014 - FY 2018

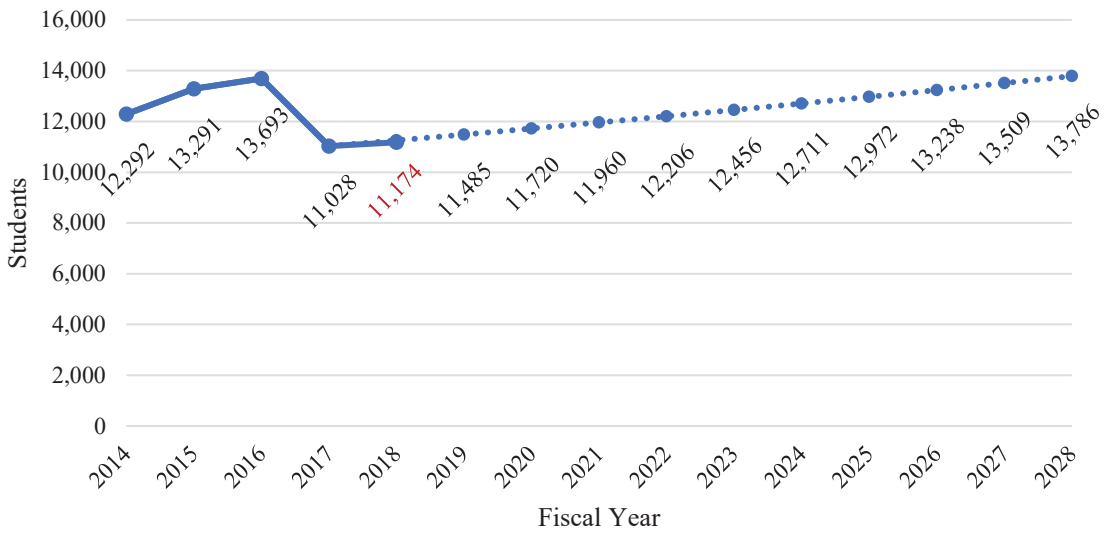


One measure of the extent to which technical colleges meet the needs of Utah employers for technically skilled workers is their placement rate. The colleges, to maintain accreditation by the Council on Occupational Education (COE), must maintain a 70% placement rate *for each program*. If a program fails to meet this standard, the college must submit a plan for improvement, detailing concrete steps to bring placement rates up to the minimum standard. If rates continue to fall below this threshold, the colleges must discontinue underperforming programs or risk losing accreditation. Placement, as defined by COE, includes students who receive employment in a field related to instruction, serve in the military, or continue their education in another program or at another college/university.

The UTECH Board of Trustees has set a goal that the technical colleges continue to maintain placement rates 10-20% above COE's minimum standard. From FY 2014 through FY 2017, system-wide placement rates hovered around 85%, 15% above accreditation requirements. FY 2018's placement rate saw improvement to 88%. Technical colleges are sending more students to work and at higher rates than in previous years.

- **Metric 2B:** Increase the numbers of incumbent workers receiving short-term job upgrade or continuing occupational education training in proportion to overall program enrollment by 25% by 2028.

Figure 5: Short-term Occupational Enrollees, FY 2014 - FY 2018
with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



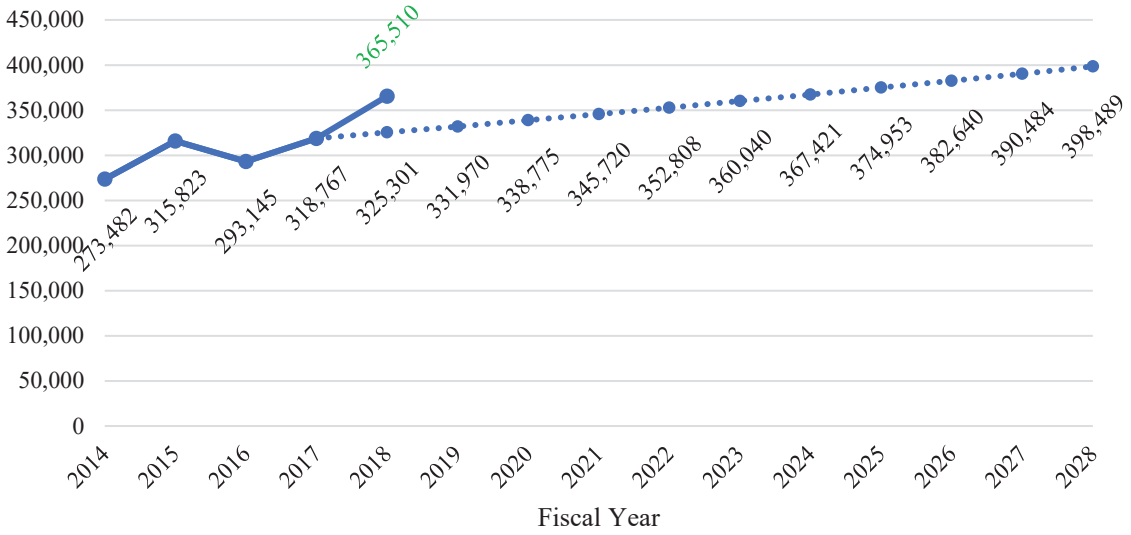
Recent revisions to UTECH policies clarified that certain types of courses previously taught at the technical colleges will no longer factor into membership hour or student headcount totals. These revisions resulted in a 21% decline in the system-wide number of distinct students enrolled in short-term occupational training from FY 2016-17. While college activities have largely remained unchanged, numbers reported look drastically different from years past.

The Board of Trustees desires to increase the number of job upgrade or continuing occupational education enrollees by 25% over the next ten years while maintaining a similar ratio of short-term trainees to certificate-seeking and secondary students. Annual growth of 2.05% is necessary to achieve this goal.

In FY 2018 UTECH's number of short-term occupational trainees grew by only 1.32%, 80 students short of its systemwide goal.

- **Metric 2C:** Increase the amount of customized workforce training provided to Utah employers through the Custom Fit program by 25% by 2028.

Figure 6: Custom Fit Instructional Hours, FY 2014 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



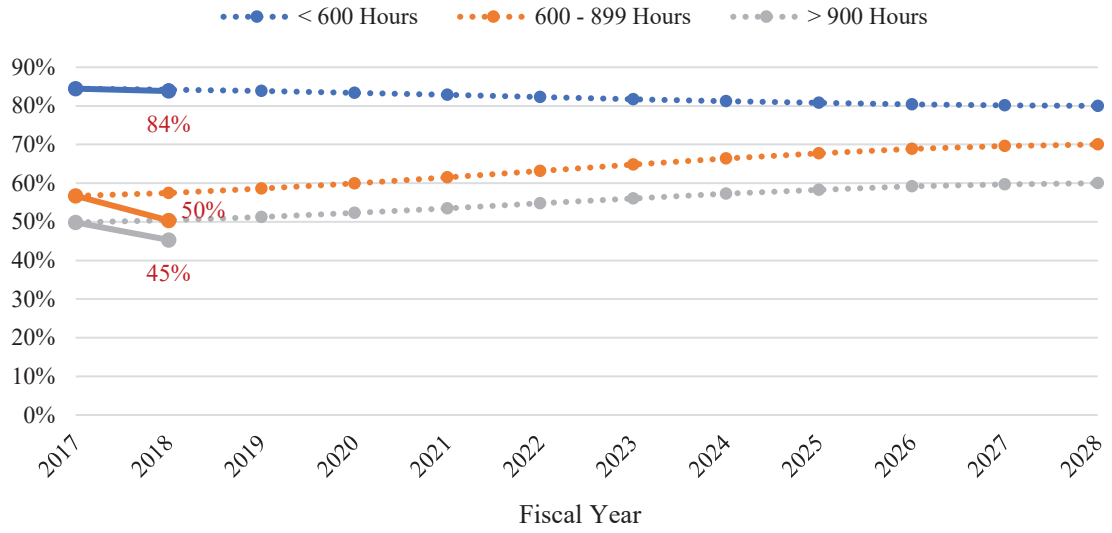
In FY 2017 the Utah System of Technical Colleges received an additional $800,000 in state appropriations for the Custom Fit program intended to bolster the number of training opportunities to local companies, resulting in further economic development of the state. After a year of acclimation to increased budgets, technical colleges and our partners at Snow College and Utah State University Eastern have surpassed their goal for FY 2018 by approx. 40,000 hours. In FY 2018 the colleges provide more Custom Fit training than at any other time since oversight of the program was given to the Utah System of Technical Colleges in 2001.

Goal #3: Improve internal efficiencies

- **Metric 3A:** Increase the percentage of enrolled certificate-seeking students who graduate with a technical college certificate to 80% for shorter programs (less than 600 hours), 70% for medium-length programs (600 hours or greater, but less than 900 hours), and 60% for longer programs (900 hours or greater) by 2028.

Graduation rates as reported by Utah's technical colleges are stratified by program length. As would be expected, graduation rates for the longest programs are lower than those observed among the shortest programs; students are more likely to complete a program requiring three or four months of than a program requiring 18 to 24. Addressing this disparity, the UTECH Board of Trustees has established the goal that by 2028, graduation rates should reach 80% for programs lasting less than 600 hours in length, 70% for programs lasting 600-899 hours, and 60% for programs of 900 hours or more.

Figure 7: USTC Graduation Rates by Program Length,
FY 2017 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



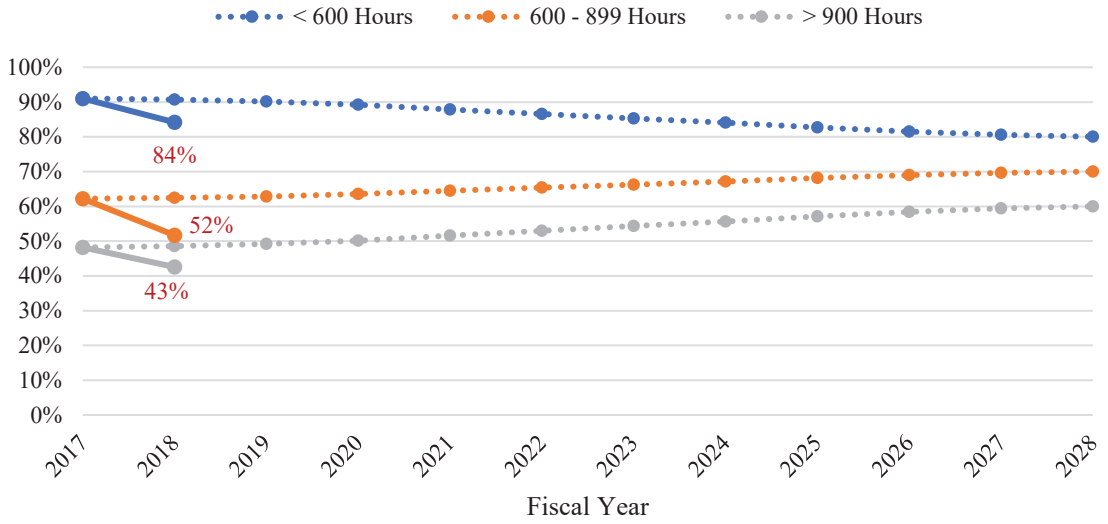
The graduation rate for the shortest of programs in FY 2018 is already at 84%. As we move forward, the Board of Trustees expects graduation rates for programs of less than 600 hours to continue to exceed the 80% mark. Medium-length and longer programs graduation rates are at 50% and 45%, both lower than goals established last year. Target graduation rates for intervening years between now and 2028 allow time for colleges to implement practices designed to spur improvement before aggressive growth is expected. Though colleges came in under the target for medium-length and longer programs in FY 2018, colleges are removing barriers and streamlining processes to increase graduation rates. And though graduation rates are lower than targeted, COE completion rates are above minimum thresholds as a significant number of students are leaving school early with job offers in hand.

- **Metric 3B:** Increase the percentage of enrolled certificate-seeking students in identified high-wage/high-demand programs who graduate with a Board-approved technical college postsecondary certificate to 80% for shorter programs (less than 600 hours), 70% for medium-length programs (600 hours or greater, but less than 900 hours), and 60% for longer programs (900 hours or greater) by 2028.

The Board of Trustees has set the goal that graduation rates for high-demand/high-impact programs mirror the desired graduation rates of other programs at the colleges (i.e., an 80% graduation rate for programs of less than 600 hours in length, 70% for programs of 600-899 hours, and 60% for programs of 900 hours or more).

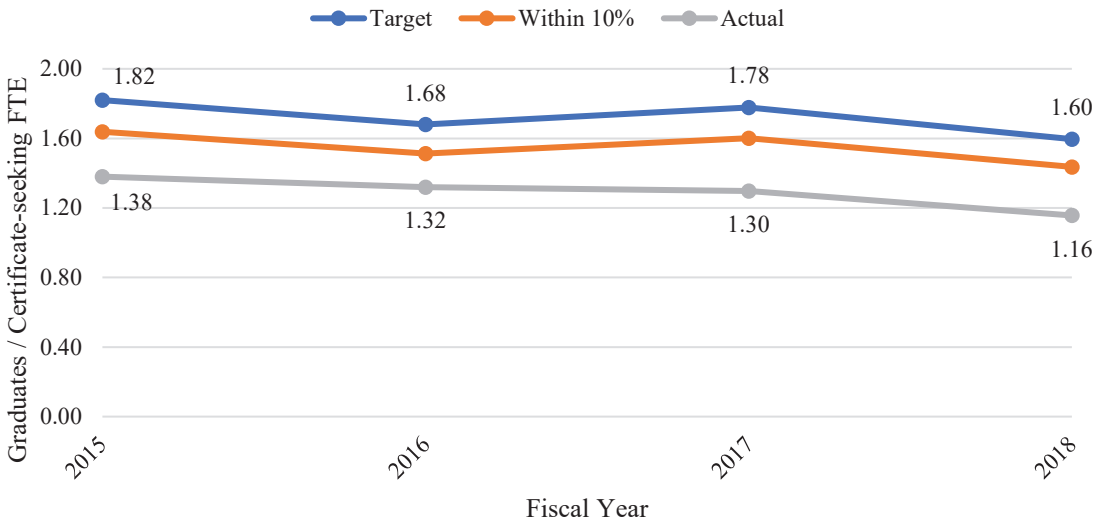
In FY 2018, high-demand program headcounts declined by over 600 students. High-wage/high-demand program graduation rates stratified by length each fell, following the same trends as observed in Figure 7. High-impact programs have similar graduation rates to programs not deemed as such.

Figure 8: UTECH High-Demand Graduation Rates by Program Length, FY 2017 - FY 2018 with Desired FY 2019 - FY 2028 Growth



- **Metric 3C:** Achieve 90% of the ideal annual number of awards per certificate-seeking full-time-equivalent (FTE) student based on employer-demanded program lengths.

Figure 9: UTECH Graduates per Certificate-seeking FTE, FY 2015 - FY 2018



While awards per full-time equivalent (FTE) is a good measure of efficiency for traditional institutions of higher education, applying the metric to Utah's technical college system proves difficult due to the variable lengths of programs offered. Colleges offer programs as short as 60 hours in length (e.g., commercial truck driving) or up to 1,600 hours (cosmetology). Even within the same program, lengths vary widely from college to college and from year to year as colleges

respond to employers' needs for workers with specific skillsets. Furthermore, not every student at a technical college is seeking a credential; a large number enroll for short-term training that is uncredentialed. Because of these considerations, UTECH calculates its *certificate-seeking* graduates per FTE, excluding short-term or other students not enrolled with the intent to earn a certificate. Here we divide membership hours accrued by certificate-seekers by 900 to derive a full-time equivalent headcount. The number of certificate-seeking graduates is then divided by the resulting quotient.

Due to the variable lengths of programs offered at technical colleges, UTECH calculates an "ideal" graduates per FTE. This number is derived by dividing 900 hours by the weighted average length of certificates awarded in a given fiscal year. In theory, if every student completed his or her program in 100% of expected time, certificate-seeking graduates per FTE would equal this ideal. The UTECH Board of Trustees has established a goal that annually, the system-wide certificate-seeking graduates per FTE should be within 10% of the ideal calculation.

(Note that prior to FY 2017 technical colleges annually reported the number of certificates awarded during each fiscal year, including so-called "exit point" certificates awarded for completion of portions of approved programs but that allowed students to obtain gainful employment with the skills obtained [e.g., a certificate in Braking Systems allows students to obtain employment at automotive repair shops, though it is only part of a full automotive program]. In early 2017 UTECH moved to report only full program graduates, excluding exit point awardees. In Figure 9 above, data reported for FY 2015-16 will not match figures included in prior years' annual reports, as UTECH staff herein calculate a certificate-seeking graduates per FTE statistic looking only at full program graduates from those years to ensure comparability with data from FY 2017-18. This is the same methodology as is used in calculating efficiency in the UTECH performance-based funding model.)

In FY 2018 the ideal certificate-seeking graduates per FTE dropped to 1.60. This is a function of significantly longer programs. Technical colleges did not meet that standard, coming in at 1.16 graduates per certificate-seeking FTE.