

Workforce: Meeting Today's Needs & Preparing Utah for Tomorrow

Economic Development and Workforce Services Interim Committee

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UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

TALENT READY UTAH

Workforce Readiness Through a Balanced Education

Utah graduates are competitive

93%

of employers able to compare rated Utah graduates **equal to or better than** out-of-state graduates.

UTAH RESPONSE | Student-centered, well-rounded education

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Intellectual growth, personal development, career opportunities, and economic mobility.

BALANCED EDUCATION

General education, liberal arts, and humanities build durable skills alongside technical expertise.

INDUSTRY RELEVANCE

Employer partnerships inform evolving skills and applications while preserving broad educational value.

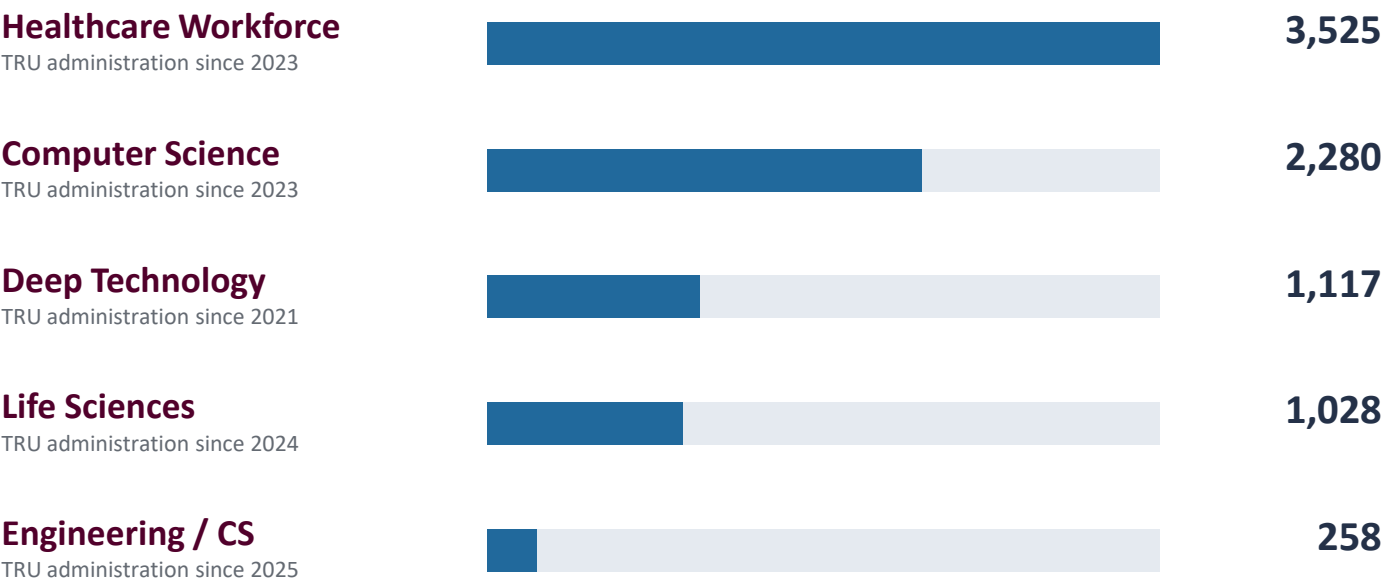
Utah's Current and Emerging Workforce Needs

Skills are increasingly the
currency of hiring

63%

of employers prefer job skills over formal
educational credentials.

UTAH RESPONSE | Industry-aligned initiatives and student reach



Reported enrollments across selected initiatives | Reporting periods vary

Sources: Cicero Group, Utah Workforce Alignment Study (2024), p. 19; TRU initiative reports (Oct. 2026). Enrollments are not unique students.

One System. Regional Workforce Solutions.

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Regions

16 institutions. One system.

Board-announced regional framework, authorized by H.B. 352 (2026), to connect institutions with regional workforce needs.

H.B. 352 (2026) | HIGHER EDUCATION ALIGNMENT

REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Organize degree-granting and technical colleges into collaborative regions.

CONNECTED PATHWAYS

Advance stackable credentials, transfer, and coordinated student services for seamless vertical integration.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY

Align program offerings and institutional strengths with regional workforce needs.

Youth Apprenticeships: Industry Embedded Education

Employer demand creates an opportunity to move from stand-alone placements to structured, industry-embedded education.

74%

of employers highly value work-based learning

UTAH RESPONSE | TRAC + INDUSTRY CO-OWNERSHIP

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS

Connect classroom instruction with paid, structured workplace learning and a clear training plan.

INDUSTRY EMBEDDED

Employers help shape occupational skills, training delivery, and assessment—not simply host a placement.

UTAH OPPORTUNITY

Expand TRAC and strengthen the Youth Apprenticeship Council.

Cooperative Education | Building a Statewide WBL Framework

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Universities building a statewide co-op model

Paid, credit-bearing, degree-aligned employment. Pilot runs July 2025–December 2027.

UTAH RESPONSE | CO-OP + CONSISTENT WBL MEASUREMENT

CO-OP PILOT

Six universities; initial mechanical engineering focus. Year 1 prioritized readiness for institutions and employers. Utah Tech completed the first placement in summer 2026.

STATEWIDE POLICY IN DEVELOPMENT

Establish shared definitions of work-based learning and high-impact learning, with consistent institutional tracking and reporting.

Workforce Pell | Expanding Access to Skilled Employment

150-599

Clock Hours

Short-term training programs designed around employer hiring needs.

WORKFORCE ALIGNED

High-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations with employer hiring need.

CREDENTIAL FOCUSED

Portable or employment-required credentials; stackable where applicable.

PERFORMANCE BASED

Completion, placement, and tuition-to-earnings outcomes must meet federal tests.

POLICY TAKEAWAY

Expand access to short-term training while ensuring credentials lead to employment value.

Workforce Pell | From Policy to Implementation

2

Approval Stages

Utah certification comes first; the U.S. Department of Education makes the federal determination.

POLICY FOUNDATION

Utah Code § 53H-11-417 and Board Policy R132 establish the state framework.

CERTIFICATION PATHWAY

Institution screening → Commissioner's Office review → workforce consultation → Utah certification → federal decision.

NEXT OPERATIONAL PHASE

Build data exchange, application tools, workforce consultation, and institutional support.

POLICY TAKEAWAY

State certification is necessary, but it does not itself authorize Pell awards.

Connecting Talent to Opportunity

73%

**of employers anticipate AI
automating job responsibilities**

Cicero identifies AI-driven changes in work as a critical consideration for Utah's future workforce.

UTAH RESPONSE | CURRENT AI INVESTMENTS + NEXT STEPS

AI-RELATED INVESTMENTS

18 funded awards identified by title across Deep Technology (10), Engineering & Computer Science (4), Computer Science (3), and Return to Work (1).

AI ACROSS INITIATIVES

TRU requires an AI component in its initiatives to support industry-relevant skills beyond dedicated AI programs.

WORKFORCE ACCELERATOR

\$3M approved by the Legislature in 2026. Four tracks include AI credentials and emerging occupations; proposals due Dec. 4, 2026.

Connecting Talent to Opportunity

65%

of employers say micro-credentials influence hiring decisions

Employers increasingly value clear evidence of skills—not just traditional credentials.

UTAH RESPONSE | MAKING SKILLS VISIBLE

TALENT HUB

Connect students and employers through skills-based job opportunities and employer-defined competencies.

LEARNING & EMPLOYMENT RECORDS

Explore portable ways to document and communicate demonstrated skills and credentials.

EMPLOYER RECOGNITION

Make skills easier to identify, verify, and use in hiring.

Moving Forward | From Employer Insights to Action

5

Year Study Cycle

Repeat the statewide employer workforce alignment study every five years to track changing needs and inform investments.

CONTINUING THE WORK | FOUR ACTIONS

DEEPEN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Involve employers in program design and work-based learning.

DEMONSTRATE SKILLS

Build on co-ops, apprenticeships, credentials, and the Talent Hub.

RESPOND TO EMERGING NEEDS

Integrate AI and deploy Workforce Accelerator investments.

Thank You

Questions & Discussion

Listening to Utah employers. Connecting education to opportunity.