

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

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

- 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.