

# Case Study of Utah Higher Education

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April 2005



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

National Center Report #05-1

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## Foreword

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education conducts two major types of policy research about the states. One is an analysis of all states, such as found in the *Measuring Up* series (2000, 2002, 2004) of state performance in higher education. The other type of research is case studies of single states to help us understand the public policies and policy environment related to important issues of higher education governance, finance, or performance. Some 14 case studies have been completed on these topics over the past decade. Both types of policy research are important in our understanding of higher education policy in the states.

The *Case Study of Utah Higher Education* examines higher education policies in Utah in order to better understand the state's generally good performance in *Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education*. Utah's historically strong performance, especially in terms of providing affordable higher education, provided an incentive for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education to further investigate the public policies of Utah that might account for its good performance as documented in *Measuring Up 2004*. Interviews for the case study occurred between September 2003 and January 2004.

The National Center was very fortunate to engage Kathy Reeves Bracco and Mario Martinez to undertake this study. Kathy Reeves Bracco is a policy consultant who previously worked with the National Center on a national study of governance in higher education. She is an author of *Designing State Higher Education Systems for a New Century*, published by ACE ORYX Press in 1999. She has conducted a number of case studies on the governance and

finance of higher education. Mario Martinez, co-author of this report, is associate professor of higher education leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has conducted research and authored case studies on the governance and finance of higher education. Martinez was also an associate with the National Center Associates Program.

The National Center also extends its appreciation to the reviewers of the *Case Study of Utah Higher Education*: William Chance of NORED, Cecelia Foxley the former Commissioner of Higher Education in Utah, Dennis Jones of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and David Longenecker with the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education.

As always, the National Center welcomes the reactions of readers to this report.

*Joni Finney*

**Vice President**

**The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education**



## Introduction

In *Measuring Up*, the biennial report card on higher education, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education uses nationally comparable data to look at state performance and to determine how well the people of the state are being served by education and training beyond high school. One of the purposes of the report card is to focus the attention of public policy leaders on issues of performance with regard to five key questions: How well does the state prepare its young people for higher education? What opportunities are there for young people and working age adults to enroll in higher education? How affordable is higher education for students and families in the state? How many students complete their educational programs? To what degree does the state benefit from an educated population? The report card challenges states to compare their performance with other states as well as evaluate their own performance over time.

While the report card provides an assessment of how well states perform relative to one another in the key policy areas, it does not address the relationship between specific state policies and performance in those vital areas. To examine that connection, the National Center conducts periodic in-depth case studies of individual states, and has selected Utah for one such study.

The National Center chose to look at Utah in part because of how the state has addressed issues of growth in the recent past. Higher education enrollments in Utah have almost doubled over the past 20 years, and are expected to grow again over the next decade. In the face of growing enrollments and increases in student participation, Utah has been able to maintain a higher education system that is more affordable for students than is the case in many states, particularly with regard to its four-year institutions. Utah stands out in *Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education* for its efforts in holding the line on affordability for the past decade, particularly when many other states saw large drops in affordability. Utah is a top performer (relative to other states) in

the areas of preparation and affordability, and has significantly improved its performance in the completion area over the past decade.<sup>1</sup> State performance in the areas of participation and benefits has declined over the past decade.

Because Utah has been able to maintain a relatively affordable system at a time when enrollments were increasing, the authors were particularly interested in the relationship between state policies and performance in the areas of enrollment/participation and affordability. Has the state made explicit policy efforts to accommodate enrollments, improve participation, and maintain affordability? What has the state done to address issues of student completion? How have these efforts influenced performance? Where is there more to be done? We asked these questions of individuals who participate in and observe higher education from a variety of perspectives (a list of all individuals interviewed for this study is included in Appendix A), and looked closely at state documents to determine how the data support their perceptions.

While the particular political and cultural context of each state differs, the issues that Utah higher education faces (accommodating enrollment growth, trying to maintain affordability in times of recession, and maintaining an appropriate array of institutions that the state can afford and that will serve students) are not unique. The results that Utah obtains have been influenced by both policy and state context, and there are lessons to be learned about those relationships.

We begin the case with a look at contextual factors, first for the state in general and then for higher education in particular. We then turn to a discussion of performance in higher education, looking specifically at how Utah performs relative to other states on some key performance measures. Next we look at the array of policies that were discussed during our state interviews, and try to understand the relationship between those policies and Utah's results on the various performance measures.

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<sup>1</sup> See the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Measuring Up: 2004: The State Report Card for Higher Education: Utah*. (San Jose: 2004).



## State Context

When most people first think of Utah, they probably think of a conservative culture and a state dominated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church), characteristics that are, in fact, true. This is the context in which Utah higher education occurs. The population is young (the median age is 27.1, the lowest in the nation) and families are large (the average 3.57 family size is the largest in the country).<sup>2</sup> This combination puts a significant burden on the education system, since the school age population is relatively larger in Utah than in other states.

With just over 2.2 million people, Utah ranks 34th in terms of population size among the 50 states. While still a relatively small state, Utah has experienced significant growth over the past 10 years. Between the 1990 and 2000 census, Utah's population grew by 29.6% (510,000 people), the fourth fastest rate of growth among the states. Though changing somewhat with this growth, the state's population remains very homogeneous: 89% are white and 67% are members of the LDS Church.<sup>3</sup> Forty percent of the state's population lives in Salt Lake County, which represents less than one percent of the total land area of the state. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing portion of the population in Utah, with a 138% increase between 1990 and 2000; the state's 201,000 Hispanics now represent about 10% of Utah's population.<sup>4</sup>

Utah enjoyed a strong economy in the 1990s, benefiting not only from the national economic boom but also from greater diversification, with less dependence on industries like defense and mining and the development and relocation of many high tech companies. The national recession of the early 1990s was barely felt in Utah, and at its peak in 1994 job growth in the state was 6.2%. The most recent recession has had a much greater impact on Utah,

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<sup>2</sup> Demographic data is available from the 2000 US Census, <http://www.census.gov>, *Table DP-1 Profile of General Demographic Characteristics*.

<sup>3</sup> Population by ethnicity is available from the 2000 US Census, <http://www.census.gov>; for population breakdown by religious affiliation, see the American Religion Data Archive, <http://www.ARDA.tn> (January 15, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> *The Changing Face of Utah: Census 2000*, <http://www.governor.utah.gov/dea/presentations/censuspres.pdf> (December 10, 2004).

with job growth down to .9% by 2001, compared to an average of 4.3% from 1989-1999.<sup>5</sup> Unemployment rates have also been rising, from a low of 3 % in 1997 to 6 % in 2002.<sup>6</sup> As in most states, downturns in the economy usually mean difficulties for higher education budgets, and Utah has been no exception the last several years.

The relative income of Utahns compared to the rest of the country depends on whether you consider per capita or household income. Per capita income in Utah is below the national average. In 1999, per capita income in Utah was \$18,185, compared to a national average of \$21,582. The below average ranking here can be partly explained by the fact that Utahns have large families, which explains the relatively high percentage of children in the state. By comparison, median household income in Utah at \$45,726 was above the national average of \$41,994.<sup>7</sup>

The homogeneity of the demographics is reflected in the state Legislature, where approximately 75% of the legislators in both houses are Republicans and almost 90% of legislators are members of the LDS Church. The Legislature is part-time and meets for a 45-day session each year. The Legislature is seen by those within the state as very strong and, by most accounts, the key policymaking body. Individual legislators have been successful championing change for higher education institutions in their particular regions. Legislators have been quite influential in the evolution of institutional missions, as will be discussed later in this paper with regard to the changes in degree offerings at two of the state's community colleges. Though the Board of Regents sets tuition and recommends tuition increases, the legislature is closely involved in the process. The legislature may use "intent language" to specify maximum increases or how increases should be spent. The use of such language in the FY2004 budget is discussed later in this case study.

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<sup>5</sup> For more discussion of the Utah economy, see *State of Utah Economic Overview*, <http://dced.utah.gov/BIRS/state/STATESUM.html> (February 9, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> State of Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, *Demographic and Economic Analysis—Labor Force Information 1980-2002*, <http://www.qget.state.ut.us/programs/td1.asp?database+eslf&TableType=1b> (January 20, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Income data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, *Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics*, Table DP-3 for Utah and the United States.

Olene Walker, Utah's governor during the time of this case study, is a Republican. Governor Walker was the lieutenant governor under Republican Governor Mike Leavitt, who served as governor for 10 years before leaving to become the head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (Utah's newly elected governor, Jon Huntsman, is also a Republican.) Both Governors Leavitt and Walker made education a top priority in their policy agendas. Governor Leavitt placed a particular emphasis on technology initiatives, pushing for greater funding in this area to improve the capacity of the higher education system to respond to the changing societal demands. Many of our respondents believe that funding declines for both K-12 and higher education have been moderated because of the efforts of the governors to hold education as harmless as possible.

State political support for higher education does appear to be strong when looking at particular funding statistics. In FY2003, higher education expenditures in Utah represented about 13.3% of total state expenditures compared to the national average of 10.8%.<sup>8</sup> Internal state figures, calculated somewhat differently from these national figures, show that higher education's share of the general budget was 17.1% in 1994–95 but was down to 15.8% in 2003–04.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> National Association of Budget Officers, *2003 State Expenditure Report*, <http://www.nasbo.org> (December 8, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, *State of Utah Budget Summaries, FY1998 and FY2003*; *Governor's Budget Recommendations: FY2005*.

## Higher Education Overview

Higher education in Utah consists of 10 public institutions, governed by the State Board of Regents. There are also three private higher education institutions, including Brigham Young University (BYU), which enrolls over 30,000 students, including about 6,600 from Utah. The State Board was established by legislation in 1969 and is by law “vested with the control, management and supervision”<sup>10</sup> of public institutions. The board consists of 18 members, including 15 appointed by the governor, one student member, and two non-voting members of the State Office of Education. The 15 gubernatorial appointees serve staggered six-year terms, and no more than eight of these appointees may be from the same political party. The board “oversees the establishment of policies and procedures, executive appointments, master planning, budget and finance, proposals for legislation, develop governmental relationships, and performs administrative unit and program approval for higher education for the State of Utah”.<sup>11</sup> The board also establishes tuition levels for all institutions. The board is staffed by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Table one gives general information on the public institutions within the Utah System of Higher Education. The system includes two research universities, two comprehensive state universities, two regional colleges (which have the bulk of their students enrolled in lower division or vocational programs), three community colleges, and a college of applied technology. The Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT) has nine separate campuses across the state.

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<sup>10</sup> Language drawn from Utah State Education Code 53B-1-103, <http://www.le.state.ut.us/~code/TITLE53B/htm/53B01005.html> (February 6, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Board responsibilities outlined on the Utah State Board of Regents Web Site, <http://www.utahsbr.edu/html/board.html> (February 6, 2004).

Table 1

<b>Utah System of Higher Education Public Institutions</b>			
<i>Institution Name</i>	<i>Institution Type</i>	<i>Enrollment (Fall 2003)</i>	<i>Tuition &amp; Fees (Fall 2003)</i>
University of Utah	Research University	29,878	\$3,646
Utah State University	Research University	23,474	\$3,071
Weber State University	Comprehensive University	19,167	\$2,632
Southern Utah University	Comprehensive University	6,048	\$2,744
Utah Valley State College	State College*	23,803	\$2,744
Dixie State College	State College*	7,682	\$1,778
Salt Lake Community College	Two-Year Community College	24,153	\$2,035
College of Eastern Utah	Two-Year Community College	2,692	\$1,740
Snow College	Two-Year Community College	4,036	\$1,670
Utah College of Applied Technology	Applied Technology College	40,904**	***

\* Both Utah Valley State College and Dixie College have a comprehensive community college mission, but now also offer upper division baccalaureate degrees in specific areas. The mission of these two institutions will be discussed at length later in the case study.

\*\* Enrollment at UCAT fluctuates because of open entry/open exit policies. This number is head count for postsecondary students only. With secondary students, enrollment at UCAT is 54,334.

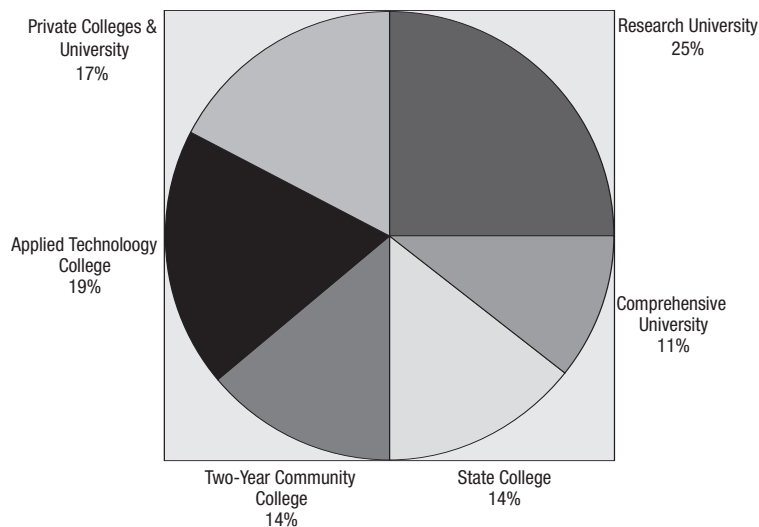
\*\*\* Base tuition for adults at UCAT (high school students by law pay no tuition) is \$1 per clock hour; tuition for some programs is higher due to industry standards or equipment/material needs.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Utah College of Applied Technology Web site, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.ucats.org/aboutfaq.html> for additional information.

Figure one illustrates the fairly balanced distribution of students into the different institutional types (including private institutions) in the state.

Figure 1

**Distribution of Enrollments by Institutional Type**



Public higher education enrollments in Utah have grown significantly over the past 20 years, doubling from the 67,000 students enrolled in 1982–83 to over 149,000 in 2003–04. (For historical comparative purposes, this number does not include UCAT enrollment. When UCAT is added, this number increases by an additional 41,000 students.)<sup>13</sup> Between 1990 and 2000, when the state population grew by almost 30%, higher education enrollments increased by 46%.<sup>14</sup> Enrollment growth has tapered off somewhat over the past few years, with an increase of less than one percent in enrollments in 2004.<sup>15</sup> Over the next decade, Utah expects more than 35,000 additional students to enroll, an increase larger than the current enrollment at the University of Utah.

<sup>13</sup> For USHE enrollment numbers, see Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2004-05*, Tab C, “Enrollment,” Table 1 (<http://www.utahsbr.edu/finance/databook.htm> September 17, 2004); for UCAT numbers see Utah College of Applied Technology, *Second Annual Report 2002-2003*, page 5; for tuition figures, see *Data Book 2004-05*, Table 3, Tab E, “Tuition and Fees” (<http://www.utahsbr.edu/finance/databook.htm> September 27, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, *2003 Long-Term Enrollment Projection Model*, (Salt Lake City: 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Shinika Sykes, “Public College Growth is Slight,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 17, 2004, p. B1.

## Performance

With the state and higher education context in mind, we now turn to performance measures. The National Center report card, *Measuring Up 2004*, grades states on their performance in higher education in five key areas: Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Completion, and Benefits. In this section we use both state and national data to look at Utah's performance on each of these indicators. While we address student preparation and the benefits that Utah gets from having an educated population, the focus of the study centers on the relationship between state policy and performance in participation, affordability, and completion.

### PREPARATION

Utah is a top performer in *Measuring Up 2004* in the category of preparing students for higher education. Utah ranks second only to Wyoming with regard to the percentage of the adult (25 and over) population who are high school graduates (or equivalent), with 90% of adults fitting this category.<sup>16</sup> In *Measuring Up 2004*, Utah is a top performer in several key preparation indicators, including the percentage of students taking upper-level math courses and eighth grade algebra.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past decade, Utah has improved its already high performance in the preparation area. *Measuring Up* does raise some concerns, however, about the gap in preparation for both ethnic minority and low-income students. Students from minority ethnic groups are two-thirds as likely to earn a high school credential as their white counterparts. The percentage of young adults from low income families who earn a high school credential has declined from 88% to 81%.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ranking Tables 2002, <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/products/ranking/2002/R02T040.htm> (January 24, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> See National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Measuring Up 2004: Utah*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Measuring Up 2004: Utah*, p. 5.

## PARTICIPATION

Utah performs less well in the category of participation than one would expect given the high preparation scores. The state is tied for the top ranking in preparation, but ranks only 32nd among the 50 states in participation.<sup>19</sup> One reason for this may be that a smaller percentage of students go on to college immediately after high school because they often take time out to go on missions for the LDS Church. It is estimated that 40% of LDS men go on a two-year mission between the ages of 19 and 26.<sup>20</sup> This may contribute to Utah's below average performance on the *Measuring Up* indicator, "Chance for College by Age 19." Utah also has a relatively low participation rate among working adults, which contributes to lower than expected performance in this category. Increasingly important is the fact that 18–24 year olds who are white are three times as likely to attend college as those of the same age who are from minority ethnic groups. This gap is the widest in the nation, and is of particular concern as the minority population in Utah continues to grow.<sup>21</sup>

Recent research by the Education Commission of the States suggests that if Utah were to improve its participation rates to match those of the states with today's highest participation rates, higher education enrollments would have to increase by 35% between 2000 and 2015.<sup>22</sup>

While their participation rates may not be as high as we would expect given the strong performance in preparation, data collected by the state show some improvement in its participation rates over the past 20 years. The Utah System

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<sup>19</sup> See *Measuring Up 2004*, "State Rankings," [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org) (December 7, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Tasha Oldham, *The Mormon Church and Missionaries*, discussion of PBS documentary, "The Smith Family," [http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/thesmithfamily/discovermore\\_b.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/thesmithfamily/discovermore_b.html) (February 25, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> *Measuring Up 2004: Utah*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ruppert, Sandra S., *Closing the College Participation Gap: A National Summary, and State Profiles: Utah* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2003).



of Higher Education (USHE) calculates participation rates as headcount enrollment as a percentage of the total 18–29 year old population in the state. Between 1981 and 2002, this number increased from 14.5% to 22.4%.<sup>23</sup>

### AFFORDABILITY

More students are preparing for higher education, and enrollment demand in many states is growing, but the rising price of college could make higher education inaccessible for many. From 1980 to 2000, the cost of attending college (tuition + expenses) nationally grew much faster than either inflation or family income. Affordability is of particular concern for the lowest income Americans. Despite almost no statewide need-based aid program, Utah has been able to maintain a relatively affordable higher education system compared to the rest of the nation by keeping tuition relatively low. The National Center's 2002 report *Losing Ground* demonstrates that tuition growth in Utah during the 1990s did not significantly outpace growth in family income as it did in many states: From 1992 to 2001, tuition increased by 7% at two-year colleges and 16% at four-year colleges in the state. Family income during the same time grew by 14%.

*Measuring Up 2004* shows Utah as having made little progress in its affordability measures over the past decade. With little investment in need-based financial aid, the state has relied on low tuition to maintain a low (relative to other states) share of family income needed to attend public or private institutions in the state. As we will discuss later in the case study, recent increases in tuition may begin to alter this statistic.

### COMPLETION

Given its high marks in *Measuring Up 2004* on preparation and affordability, Utah does not perform as well as one might expect on measures of completion. Actual completion figures may be higher than the data would indicate given the fact that so many Utah students leave school for two years to fulfill missions for the LDS Church. However, the state does not collect specific data to show longer

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<sup>23</sup> Participation rates are calculated by the USHE as a ratio of headcount enrollment in a given year to the number of 18-29 year olds in the population in that year. (Exact figures from Excel spreadsheet provided by USHE March 19, 2004.) Participation rates measured this way do not include students who attend college at out-of-state or private institutions, and thus the participation rates in fact would be higher than the percentages represented here.

term persistence and completion rates, so it is difficult to tell exactly how the performance on this measure would change if the missionary factor were taken into consideration.

We do know that while Utah is at the very top in the state rankings in terms of numbers completing high school, it is just above the national average in terms of the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher: Twenty-seven percent of Utah adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, ranking 17th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and just above the national average of 25.9.<sup>24</sup>

According to *Measuring Up 2004*, Utah has been one of the fastest improving states over the past decade in terms of the proportion of students completing certificates and degrees relative to those enrolled. Of concern, however, is that the completion rate gap has widened between Caucasians and members of ethnic minority groups. Hispanic students are only three-quarters as likely to complete a degree as their white counterparts.<sup>25</sup>

Institutional level data does indicate that a significant number of students take seven or more years to complete their degrees: At Weber State University, for example, for the cohort of first-time freshmen in 1990–1991, 29% of students had completed a degree within six years; now, after more than 10 years, 50% of that cohort has completed a degree.<sup>26</sup> At Utah State University, efforts have been made to improve the six-year graduation rate, which has increased from 41% (1992 cohort) to 57% (1997 cohort) as a result of specific efforts by the institution to move students through to completion more effectively.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Ranking Tables 2002.

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/products/ranking/2002/R02T040.htm> and <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/products/ranking/2002/R13T040.htm> (January 22, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> *Measuring Up 2004: Utah*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Weber State University graduation rates are drawn from the Weber State University Office of Institutional Research Web site, *Table 9, Graduation Rates for Full-time First-Time Freshmen 1987-88 Through 1995-96*. <http://departments.weber.edu/ir/3t09.htm> (February 26, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Utah State University graduation rates are from USU institutional research Web site, <http://aaa.lib.usu.edu/FactsFigures/RetentionGraduation.htm> (March 10, 2004). Efforts to improve graduation rates at USU were explained during interview process.

## BENEFITS

The category of benefits in *Measuring Up 2004* is a derivative category: A state has to make improvements in other categories to show public benefits from higher education. Utah performs relatively well compared to other states in terms of the benefits that it accrues from having an educated population, in part because of the contribution of its residents to the civic good, as measured by charitable giving, voting, and volunteerism. Despite the fact that a relatively high percentage of residents have a bachelor's degree, Utah has been one of the few states to see a decline in the economic benefits to the state, suggesting the need for more aggressive economic development.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See *Measuring Up 2004: Utah*, p. 11

## State Policies to Address Access, Growth, and Affordability

How might we explain the kind of performance Utah gets in *Measuring Up*? We asked this general question of individuals who are either participants in or observers of the higher education system in Utah, and almost to a person the first answer was that much of this is explained by the culture of the state. The culture in Utah places significant emphasis on the value of education, and encourages students to pursue education and training beyond high school. The value placed on education, explained most of our observers, has led to the historical use of two basic policies: (1) funding based on enrollment growth; and (2) a low-tuition policy. These two policies, according to the majority of people we spoke with, best explain the kind of performance that Utah gets. Even those who do not like these policies argue that they help to explain the state's performance results.

### FUNDING FOR ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Everyone that we spoke with talked about the long-standing legislative policy of funding enrollment growth—rewarding institutions with additional appropriations based on the number of new students enrolled each year. “What really matters in terms of policy is where the money goes,” argued one campus president. Since the mid-1980s the funding formula has had a marginal cost increase per student for each new student enrolled in an institution. This figure differs by type of institution and by level of instruction. Lower division marginal cost increases requested by the USHE in the FY2005 budget ranged from \$3,237 per FTE at the College of Eastern Utah to \$5,106 at the University of Utah. Upper division increases requested in FY2005 ranged from \$4,300 at Dixie to \$7,015 at the University of Utah.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Marginal cost figures are from USHE, *Utah Higher Education Funding Formula, Funding Distribution Detail - FY2003-04* provided by USHE March 19, 2004.

Those who spoke positively of this approach suggested that it encourages access. Colleges and universities are much less likely to turn away students when there is financial incentive for taking on new students. Opponents of this approach argue that funding enrollment growth alone may encourage colleges to “chase” enrollments, even when the students are not a particularly good fit for that institution.

For the three years prior to the 2004 legislative session, however, with state budget problems, enrollment growth was not fully funded, leaving many in the state to talk about the “unfunded enrollment” at each institution. The Board of Regents argues that, as of fall 2003, there were 10,474 students for whom the USHE had received no state funding, leading to an average state funding per student reduction from 1998–99 to 2002–03 of \$788 per student. A more complete comparison looks at total revenues (including tuition). When tuition revenues are figured in, dollars per student have decreased by \$371 over this same time period, a five percent reduction in funding per student.<sup>30</sup> Institutions have absorbed these additional students in different ways, from greater use of adjunct faculty and increased class sizes to limiting the number of sections offered.

In the early 1990s, the state was unable to fully fund enrollment growth for one year, but the Legislature made up for it the following year by essentially repaying institutions for the lost funding. Given the current economic situation of the state, very few expect that the state will “pay back” those unfunded enrollments, and many expect that the state may not return to growth funding once they have seen that institutions can serve the extra students without the additional funds. Several people we spoke with (both higher education leaders and state policymakers) saw this as a potential positive for the state. Moving away from a formula that only awards enrollment growth, they argue, allows the state to keep the system from becoming unwieldy, where every institution has incentive to enroll as many students as possible, regardless of institutional fit.

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<sup>30</sup> Memo from Cecelia H. Foxley to the State Board of Regents regarding the 2004-2005 Budget Process and Priorities, September 3, 2003.

While many in higher education would like to see changes to a formula that they feel insufficiently recognizes quality and performance, everyone still talks about “unfunded enrollments” and about how they need the funding for each of those students to provide the best education possible.

It remains to be seen what will happen with the funding formula once the state budget picture improves. The 2004 Legislature added \$4.6 million to cover 10% of actual enrollment growth in the system. The Legislature also adopted “intent language” calling upon the Board of Regents and the presidents to “review and refine the funding formula” for the Utah System of Higher Education to “reduce dependence on growth funding, link to measurable system-wide and institutional specific performance indicators, respond to changes in costs of instruction...and respond to market demand and student performance as well as recognized differences in institutional roles and mission.”<sup>31</sup>

## LOW TUITION

A second long-standing practice in the state has been a real effort to keep tuition rates as low as possible. Even after several years of double-digit increases, tuition at the state’s four-year institutions is still well below the average of similar institutions nationally. While still less expensive than the national average, Utah community colleges do not rank quite as low as their four-year counterparts.<sup>32</sup> One president hypothesized that the higher than average two-year tuition is acceptable to the legislators and to the general public because two-year tuition remains below that at the four-year institutions within the state.

Most of the individuals we spoke with felt that tuition had historically been kept low as a general response to the demographics in Utah: Utah has the largest family size in the country and people often have multiple children in college at the same time. The effort to keep tuition low is explained as a response in part to the recognition that the state does not want to place too big

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<sup>31</sup> Intent language is drawn from Legislative Fiscal Analyst Web site, *Recommendations for the Appropriations Subcommittee for Higher Education for the Year Ending June 30, 2005*, <http://www.le.state.ut.us/interim/2004/pdf/00000282.pdf> (March 10, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> See *Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2003-2004 Tuition and Fee Rates*, <http://www.hecb.wa.gov/research/issues/tuition.asp> (December 7, 2004). Tables 1, 5, and 9 show that Utah’s flagship institution ranks 42nd in terms of tuition and fees; comprehensive universities rank 47th and community colleges rank 35th.

a burden on families. (This ethic even pervades within the private sector, where BYU has one of the lowest tuitions of any major private university.) However, over the past three years, as the state budget has declined and lawmakers have fewer dollars to designate toward higher education, tuitions have begun to rise. Traditionally, the state provided about 70% of total revenues with 30% coming from tuition; today, this split is closer to 60% state to 40% tuition, and is close to a 50-50 split at one institution (Utah Valley).

While the across-the-board tuition increases have been relatively small (approximately 4.5% per year since 2000), the regents have for the past three years enacted what they call “second tier increases” specific to the individual institutions. Institutional presidents, after consultation with students, propose the second-tier increases to address campus-specific needs. These increases must be approved by the regents, but not by the Legislature, and are made in addition to the system-wide tuition increases. The relative increases vary widely by institution. In 2003–04, second tier tuition increases ranged from 6% at the College of Eastern Utah to 20.5% at Southern Utah University.

The second-tier increases, according to one member of the commissioner’s staff, were designed as a “way for institutions to increase tuition more aggressively and not take a hit in the legislative process.” While there has been some grumbling among legislators about the second-tier increases (perhaps because they leave legislators out of the loop entirely), there are some in the Legislature who feel that this practice takes pressure off them. “It’s a user fee,” says one legislator “and then I don’t have to raise taxes.” Campus officials, not surprisingly, like the two-tier tuition approach. “Second-tier increases allow us to use the tuition increase where it does the best job,” argues one administrator. At Utah State University (USU), for example, the second-tier increase has focused on two areas: (1) faculty head count (particularly increasing the number of faculty in engineering courses and in the lower division “bottleneck” courses so that more sections can be offered to students); and (2) student advising, where the university is trying to improve its advising system to reduce the number of “false starts” that students make, thus getting them through the pipeline more quickly. A USU administrator credited these efforts with the improvements the university has realized in their six-year graduation rates.

Flexibility from second-tier tuition increases may soon become a thing of the past: In the 2004 legislative session, the Legislature adopted “intent language” that set limits on second-tier tuition increases, calling for those increases to be used to cover specific budget needs such as unfunded enrollment, operations

and maintenance, and fuel and power increases.<sup>33</sup> If continued in the next appropriations bill, this significantly changes the initial intent of the second-tier increase, removing much of the campus flexibility for which they were first adopted.

Those who expressed the most concern with the recent tuition increases suggested that the state might be drifting away from a low tuition/low aid policy to a high tuition/low aid policy. Utah has very little state funded need-based aid, and so there has been no increase in aid to correspond with tuition increases. While recent systemwide tuition increases included a .5% set-aside for financial aid, most say that this is such a small number that it will have very little impact. In the 2004 legislative session, the Legislature adopted “intent language” removing the proposed .5% set-aside for financial aid, reducing the overall “first-tier” increase from 4.5% to 3.0%. As one campus administrator puts it, the state takes a fairly “egalitarian” approach to tuition—make it low for everyone and don’t ask some individuals to pay more in order to have some left over for financial aid. A real financial aid program would require a “cultural shift” says a campus president.

While some in Utah are concerned that there are individuals who are and will continue to be left out of higher education if tuition increases are not accompanied by financial aid increases for those most in need, others see higher education as a “private good” that should be funded by the individual who benefits. In a fall 2003 press release, then-Commissioner Cecelia Foxley expressed a “particular concern about the participation rates of low income Utahns, who are only half as likely to obtain a college education as the national average.”<sup>34</sup>

We found many individuals in the state who believe that Utah needs to reconsider its long-term tuition philosophy. For generations the philosophy of low tuition has worked well in Utah; slower economic growth and greater demands on state money from other areas may make the continuation of this policy more difficult.

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<sup>33</sup> Intent language is drawn from Legislative Fiscal Analyst Web site, *Recommendations for the Appropriations Subcommittee for Higher Education for the Year Ending June 30, 2005*, <http://www.le.state.ut.us/interim/2004/pdf/00000282.pdf> (March 10, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, “Utah Reacts to ‘Closing the College Participation Gap,’” press release, October 1, 2003.



## An Array of Policies

Funding enrollment growth and an historical commitment to low tuition were universally mentioned as explanations for why the state gets the kinds of results that it has with regard to access and affordability. In addition, the state, either through the Legislature, governor, or regents has initiated other policies that affect performance. Individual perceptions about the success of these policies vary, but the policies themselves highlight the efforts that Utah has made to address these issues.

### ENROLLMENT REDIRECTION

In the late 1980s, the Board of Regents adopted a Master Plan that had as one of its key priorities the redistribution of students within the higher education system. The 1987 Master Plan identified a “top heavy” problem in the system, where the bulk of the students were enrolled in the more expensive research institutions (the University of Utah and Utah State University) with a much lower concentration of students in the two-year colleges. At the time, the challenge for the state was how to continue to provide access and meet projected enrollment growth during a time of recession. Given that community colleges have a much lower cost per student to the state than the four-year institutions, enrollment redirection was an attempt to bring greater efficiency into the system.

The Master Plan sought to “direct a high percentage of new lower division enrollment growth to the community colleges.”<sup>35</sup> The idea was that through working with high school counselors, parents, and students, better information would be provided to students about the range of higher education opportunities available and about where the best possible fit for each student

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<sup>35</sup> Utah State Board of Regents, *The Challenge of Change: Master Planning for Utah Higher Education*, Executive Summary, January 1987, p. 3.

might be. The 1987 Master Plan established enrollment targets through 1995, with the “goal of enrolling at least one third of Utah public higher education students in community colleges by the year 2000.”<sup>36</sup>

Whether a specific result of this policy or not, enrollment growth at some of the two-year institutions has been swift. In the late 1980s Utah Technical College officially changed its name to Salt Lake Community College and, according to its president, the name change coupled with the ability to offer transfer degrees had a significant impact on enrollment. Between fall of 1989 and fall of 1990, for example, headcount enrollment at Salt Lake Community College increased by 16%.<sup>37</sup> In Utah County, enrollments at Utah Valley State College (UVSC) have surged as well, due to many factors: general population growth in the area, policy changes at BYU to take fewer in-state residents, and a USHE change in 1993 that enabled UVSC to begin offering four-year degrees (see below). Table two provides a snapshot of how enrollment has changed at each of the community colleges in the past 15 years.

*Table 2*

<b>Community College Enrollments 1988-89 to 2003-04</b>		
<i>Institution</i>	<i>Head-count Enrollment 1988-89</i>	<i>Head-count Enrollment 2003-04</i>
College of Eastern Utah	2,063	2,367
Dixie State College	2,228	6,271
Salt Lake Community College	9,368	23,201
Snow College	1,544	3,342
Utah Valley State College	6,832	21,182

Overall, between 1988–89 and 2003–04, head-count enrollments in the two-year institutions increased by more than 34,000 students, an increase of 156%. Overall head-count enrollment during this time increased by 64,000 students, an 85% increase.<sup>38</sup> As the table above shows, all but one community college (the

<sup>36</sup> Utah State Board of Regents, *The Challenge of Change: Master Planning for Utah Higher Education, Executive Summary, January 1987* (Salt Lake City), p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Katherine Kapos, “New SLCC President Calls Education of Students His Guiding Principle,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1991, p B2.

<sup>38</sup> For FTE numbers see Utah State System of Higher Education, *USHE 2003 Long-Term Enrollment Projection Model*. The enrollment numbers for the two-year institutions include enrollments at Utah Valley and Dixie College, which were two-year institutions at the time of the enrollment management policy, even though they each now offer four-year degrees and are technically considered four-year institutions.

College of Eastern Utah) saw their enrollments more than double during this time period. The higher percentage growth in the two-year institutions suggests that the policy did have an impact and that there are more students entering the lower cost institutions.

Whether the goal of the 1987 Master Plan (to enroll one-third of students in a community college) was ultimately met depends upon how one counts Utah Valley State College enrollments. UVSC was still a two-year institution in 1987, but in 1993 gained the authority to offer baccalaureate degrees as well (see discussion below). USHE figures show that in fall 2000, approximately 37% of students are enrolled in two-year colleges if UVSC enrollments are included (backing out the 1,200 upper division students). If UVSC is not included as a two-year college, then only 24% of students are enrolled in two-year institutions.)<sup>39</sup>

Presumably, this redirection effort, if successful, would alter the balance of lower/upper division students at the state’s two public research institutions, the University of Utah and Utah State University. As the two highest cost institutions, these would be the places where students would in theory be redirected from for the first two years. Table three shows the changes in the numbers and percentage of upper- and lower-division students in these institutions over the past 10 years.

Table 3

**Lower- and Upper-Division Students at the University of Utah and Utah State University, 1991-92 through 2001-02<sup>40</sup>**

**University of Utah**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Lower-Division Students</i>	<i>Number of Upper-Division Students</i>	<i>Percent Lower-Division</i>
1991-92	9,962	7,198	58%
2001-02	9,674	8,964	52%

**Utah State University**

1991-92	6,657	4,142	62%
2001-02	8,658	5,990	59%

<sup>39</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2003-2004*, Tab C, “Enrollments,” Table 1: *Enrollment History*, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Data on Upper and Lower Division Enrollments is from Utah System of Higher Education, “Five Year History—Annualized FTEs by Level of Instruction Academic Years 1998-2003” and “USHE FTE Enrollment by Level 1991-1997”. Tables provided by USHE staff, February 25, 2004.

As the data in the table indicate, the percentage of lower division students at each of the institutions has gone down slightly (and, in fact, at the University of Utah the number of lower division students has decreased as well.) While one legislator sees this as evidence that the policy was a success, others within the system argue that the system is still far too “top heavy” and that the redirection policy has had at best a minimal impact on the distribution of students throughout the system.

A legislator we spoke with thinks that this redirection of students has been successful in terms of numbers (more students have gone to the two-year institutions) but not in terms of outcomes. “Quality (at these institutions) is not what it should be.” A campus administrator called the policy a failure because it really sought to direct students to institutions in their geographic service areas but that “those institutions did not necessarily best serve student needs.” Two administrators from campuses that previously only offered two-year degrees argued that it is precisely *because* of student and community needs—particularly in rural and isolated regions—that their institutions began offering four-year degrees.

Whether because of the enrollment redirection policy or in spite of it, the two-year institutions have seen significant growth in Utah over the last decade, and this growth does not appear to have affected the capacity of the system to offer baccalaureate degrees. In 1991–92 public institutions in the state awarded 6,390 baccalaureate degrees; by 2001–02, that number was 10,277, an increase of 60%.<sup>41</sup> Given that this figure is higher than the FTE growth over that same period (which was 42%), it appears that the state has been able to increase the numbers of students receiving degrees despite the redistribution of those students between two- and four-year institutions when they enter the system.

#### **BACCALAUREATE DEGREES AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS**

Certainly the most contentious policy with regard to higher education in Utah over the past 15 years or so has been the move to allow two of the community colleges to offer four-year degrees. Utah Valley State College was the first to be

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<sup>41</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2002-2003 and 2003-2004*, Tab B, “Degrees and Award,” *Tables 1 and 2, Five Year History of Degrees and Awards*.

given this authority in 1993; in 1999, the Legislature awarded Dixie College the authority to offer the baccalaureate as well. Though the circumstances leading to the request for change in authority were different at the two institutions, there were many similarities in the process. In both cases, the change in role was advocated by at least one powerful legislator from the college's local community. The Dixie College case in particular illustrates what many of our interviewees describe as the "governing" role of the Legislature with regard to the regents and higher education.

### Utah Valley State College

In the late 1980s, there was growing demand in the Provo/Orem (Utah County) area for greater access to four-year degrees in the community. A primary argument was that because Utah County residents do not live within a 25-mile commuting distance of a four-year state institution like other residents along the Wasatch Front (the populated area along the western edge of the Wasatch Mountains, where about 80% of the state's population resides),<sup>42</sup> they are not being served by the state with regard to higher education. That, coupled with the fact that Brigham Young University (BYU) (located in Provo as well) places a cap on its enrollment and admits a relatively small number of Utah residents (only 23% of BYU students are Utah residents, and only about 3% are from Utah County)<sup>43</sup>, leaves local residents with limited options for a four-year degree. Salt Lake City is only about 45 miles away, but with Utah winters the drive can be a long one and not an easy commute for working students.

Initially, according to the president at Utah Valley at the time, an arrangement was made with Weber State University to establish a "University Center" on the Utah Valley campus. The Center began with some Weber State faculty coming to campus and offering courses in business and computing, and eventually evolved into a model where Weber State hired qualified Utah Valley faculty to teach the courses themselves. The model became one where Weber State got the money from the state and offered the degrees, and Utah Valley provided the facility, the students, and some of the faculty.

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<sup>42</sup> Wasatch Front definition is at *Utah Place Names*,

<http://members.aol.com/utahhwys/placname.htm> (February 13, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Percentage of students from Utah is drawn from BYU Web site page *Demographics*

<http://unicomm.byu.edu/about/factfile/demo.aspx?lms=9> (February 9, 2004).

Student demand led the president at the time to go to the regents to propose that Utah Valley take over the programs and be given the authority to offer the baccalaureate in selected areas. During the 1991 legislative session, Senator C.E. Peterson from Provo, Utah, introduced legislation to change the role of Utah Valley Community College from a two-year to a four-year institution. The Board of Regents commissioned a study to look at baccalaureate needs in Utah in general. The results of this study, issued in 1992, concluded that Utah county was the area in the state with the greatest baccalaureate need, and recommended a reconstitution of UVCC as a community college that offered selected baccalaureate degrees. The report also recommended “substantially bolstered” University Centers programs at Dixie and the College of Eastern Utah.<sup>44</sup> While the Board of Regents initially argued against the plan, calling first for the further investment in the University Centers program, in 1993 approval was given for the new Utah Valley State College to offer baccalaureate degrees in high demand areas. The three initial degree offerings have grown during the past 10 years to over 30 baccalaureates, and enrollment has grown from 10,000 to over 23,000 students. Over one-quarter of those are now enrolled in upper division courses.<sup>45</sup>

Offering baccalaureate degrees in Utah Valley “has been a good move” according to one long-time observer of higher education in Utah. “We were kind of uneasy about it at first, but the proof is in the pudding. The majors have been populated and the customer base is there.” Despite concerns by some that the quality of the degree is watered down, there is no evidence that these students have been disadvantaged in the job market, according to another observer.

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<sup>44</sup> In February 1992, a report by Bill Chance and NORED recommended that, because of population needs, Utah Valley Community College be reconstituted as a community college that offered selective baccalaureate programs in response to community needs.

<sup>45</sup> Discussion of Utah Valley’s move towards the baccalaureate degree is drawn from Katherine Kapos, “Regents Say No to UVCC as 4-Year School,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1991, p. 2B and Lili Wright, “Commissioner Advocates Three-Year UVCC Plan,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1992, p. B1 and Joan O’Brien, “Utah Valley College to Graduate to 4-Year Status in 3 Programs,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 8, 1993, page B1. Enrollment numbers are from Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2003-2004*. Tab C, “Enrollments”, p. 7.

## Dixie State College

Dixie State College, located in the southern Utah city of St. George, was the second two-year institution in the state to take up the call for the baccalaureate degree. Prior to this change, Southern Utah University, located just 45 minutes north of St. George in Cedar City, had been providing some upper division classes on the Dixie campus. According to newspaper accounts at the time, a 1998 audit by the commissioner's office found that SUU had apparently held back approximately \$400,000 that had been earmarked for classes at Dixie's University Center.<sup>46</sup> While SUU administrators argued that this was simply an oversight, the revelation brought on the ire of many in St. George, most notably state representative Bill Hickman. Hickman took matters into his own hands, defying the Board of Regents' recommendations (which were to keep the University Centers model in place but open it up to other four-year institutions, not just SUU), and introduced legislation to make Dixie a four-year college.<sup>47</sup> To make sure that everyone knew where the power over these issues lies in the state, Hickman threatened a second bill to abolish the Board of Regents if his other measure did not pass. In a strongly worded editorial calling on the Legislature to reject Hickman's Bill, the *Salt Lake Tribune* argued that the bill was "inimical to the system of governance lawmakers themselves created to oversee Utah's nine state-supported colleges and universities."<sup>48</sup> Yet legislative governance prevailed, and ultimately, Dixie was given approval in the fall of 1999 to offer two baccalaureate degrees. Now called Dixie State College of Utah, the institution offers baccalaureate degrees in business administration, computer and information technology, and elementary education and enrolls about 12% of its 7,600 students in upper division courses.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Dan Egan, "Dixie College May Become 'University Center'; Regents consider shifting \$500,000 from Southern Utah University to bachelor's degree programs in St. George," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1998, p. B5.

<sup>47</sup> Prior to the change in Dixie's mission, the Economic Development Council of Washington County, where Dixie College is located, commissioned NORED to conduct a needs assessment for baccalaureate degrees in the area. The recommendations of this report called for a change to Dixie modeled on the Utah Valley State College version. Bill Hickman used this study as grounds for introducing his bill.

<sup>48</sup> "Quell Dixie Revolt," editorial, *Salt Lake Tribune*, Feb. 4, 1999, p A12.

<sup>49</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2004-05*, Tab C, "Fall Semester Headcount Enrollment Residency Status and Class Standing Academic Year 2002-03 and 2003-04," Table 3 (<http://www.utahsbr.edu/finance/databook.htm> September 17, 2004).

There appears to be more skepticism about the changes at Dixie College than at UVSC, perhaps because they were made more recently, perhaps because of the proximity to SUU. The changes in Dixie were described as “depressing” by one observer, because of the cost to the state of having another baccalaureate institution, particularly one that duplicates something that already exists nearby. As one regent suggests, “The role of Dixie is going to gradually expand because this is what the community wants and they continue to have powerful legislative clout.” The question the state will have to answer is how much duplication are they going to pay for 45 minutes apart. One university administrator did say that there were probably some reasons why it made sense for Dixie College to offer a baccalaureate degree in a critical area like nursing, but added that this may just add to mission confusion.

#### **Precedent for other two-year colleges?**

Now that two of the two-year colleges have been given the authority to offer four-year degrees, one can only wonder how long it will be before another institution has similar aspirations. Clearly there is pressure from the local communities to make such a move, but the Legislature, at least for now, has not made any moves in this direction. This issue could, however, be easily raised, depending upon the evolution of the Utah College of Applied Technology (see below).

#### **UTAH COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY**

After an eight-year battle in the Legislature, business and industry leaders and legislators adopted legislation in 2001 that brought the Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT) into the higher education system in Utah. UCAT was created from nine vocational technical centers throughout the state with a central “campus” that is really only an administrative office. The college was created, according to its president, in response to business and industry’s call for students who are skilled in certain areas and equipped to work. In addition to its postsecondary role, UCAT still has a significant portion of high school students that it trains (approximately 1/3 of its enrollment comes from high school students), blurring its role as part of higher education. Postsecondary enrollments at the UCAT campuses range from over 9,000 students at the Bridgerland (located in Logan, near Utah State University) and Mountainland (in Orem, near Brigham Young and Utah Valley State College) campuses, to just over 200 students at Dixie Applied Technology College Campus (in the southern part of the state near Dixie College).



As one would suspect, those who are most supportive of UCAT are those who are business leaders (including many regents) while those who are most critical come from the traditional higher education community and public (K-12) education. Supporters of UCAT's inclusion in higher education argue that from the student standpoint it has been a "smashing success." A regent noted that the inclusion in higher education offers the UCAT institutions a kind of prestige that they did not have before, and therefore encourages more students to seek education at these institutions if they believe they have more "clout" as a college than as a technical center. Another regent argues that UCAT is a good example of how we can provide education more efficiently. "As flawed as the legislation is...I believe that whoever can do it (provide educational opportunity) and meet student needs should do it."

Critics of the 2001 legislation argue that it is confusing. While part of the statewide system of higher education, UCAT has its own board and its budget goes through the commerce committee, not the higher education appropriations committee. Another commonly mentioned concern is that the Legislature requires the Board of Regents to create an "associate of applied technology degree" offered on the UCAT campuses and transferable to other USHE institutions. This associate degree requires a general education component that must be contracted out to another institution of higher education.

The biggest concern among the "traditional" higher education institutions about the inclusion of UCAT in the Utah System of Higher Education is that of duplication. UCAT institutions offer many of the same courses and programs that the community colleges do. The president of UCAT argues that his institutions offer things "in a different way" from the community colleges (shorter-term, competency-based, non-credit) and therefore are not duplicative, but rather provide a different option for students. On the other hand, campus officials, particularly from institutions that offer two-year degrees, see UCAT as direct competition to their programs. While currently UCAT campuses are not allowed to offer general education ("the safety" provided by the Legislature to keep academic drift from occurring, according to the UCAT president) many campus administrators see this as a temporary restriction that will likely be lifted in the near future. The historical evolution of institutions like Salt Lake Community College from technical center to technical college to community college is a pattern likely to be repeated, many higher education administrators believe. If the UCAT institutions evolve similarly, the costs to the state could be great as new facilities would be required. "We've gone overboard with access

here,” argues one administrator. The reservations about UCAT are very much issues of turf: Just as the presidents of the four-year institutions were wary of authorizing Utah Valley and Dixie to offer baccalaureate degrees, administrators at institutions that offer associate degrees and vocational programs are concerned about the expanding role that UCAT will play in higher education.

Despite the complaints about the confusion created by UCAT, the potential for duplication with the community colleges and the fear that these institutions will one day try to become full-fledged community colleges, there does seem to be a sense that these institutions provide an affordable alternative for education and training beyond high school for those students who want to obtain a degree in a manner that may not fit into a traditional academic calendar or program.

### **MISSION AND ROLES STATEMENTS**

The biggest criticism against the adoption of the baccalaureate at Utah Valley and, particularly, Dixie, is that it represents a classic case of “mission drift” in the state, where every institution wants to “move up” the institutional ladder. This is a similar concern among critics of the inclusion of UCAT in the higher education system: “We have created the community colleges of the future,” argues one state administrator, with no place for other institutions to go but “up” if they want to be able to compete for students. “We have two research universities and 18 institutions (if one counts UCAT campuses as 9 separate entities) for 2 million people,” argues one college president, expressing a widely held concern that the state is being stretched too thin with regard to funding its institutions.

In 2002 the Board of Regents instituted a Mission and Roles Policy that attempts to avoid further mission drift. The process is supposed to help “configure a system...to meet the educational needs of the citizens of the State of Utah and to maintain system integrity by defining institutional categories.”<sup>50</sup> The commissioner’s staff began development of this policy by describing (on paper) each institution and its mission; institutions were then given about a year to look at how they were defined, and to revise and refine that definition and develop a statement that clearly defines its own role and mission. While most institutions did have some mission and role statement prior to this, according to

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<sup>50</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, R312, *Configuration of the Utah System of Higher Education and Institutional Missions and Roles*, <http://www.utahsbr.edu/policy/r312.htm> (October 2, 2003).

one administrator, “Most were fairly ambiguous.” The commissioner’s office is in the middle of the process now, with only the Utah State University and Snow College mission and roles statements having been reviewed and approved.

One legislator sees this policy as “an attempt to address mission drift problems” in the state. A campus administrator pointed to this as a very significant policy that would keep “mission creep” at bay because it would not be very easy to move from one institutional type to another, and would limit institutions to offering only those things that they do best.

Yet many of our respondents doubt that big changes will come from this new policy. A campus administrator warned that this exercise was nothing more than a descriptive exercise where institutions just write down what they are doing at the present time, with no overall direction about the relative balance of institutional types the state needs, just what it already has. “Whatever you have on paper is sometimes second to political expediency,” argues one respondent, and as was the case with the push towards Dixie offering four-year degrees, just because the mission statement says that you can’t expand in a certain way does not mean that the Legislature will not move to change that mission statement.

The mission and roles policy seems to be an attempt by the regents to reassert its role as the governing body for higher education. The idea is that this process will enable the Board of Regents to keep balance within the system, to avoid further situations (like the Dixie example) where the Legislature was able to push forward a mission change against the wishes of the regents. According to several of our interviewees, however, given the relative power of the Legislature, it is unlikely that if a strong legislator made a similar push for an institutional mission change as happened with Dixie, change may result, regardless of the “approved” mission statement for that institution.

### **ENROLLMENT “PAUSE”**

After several years of the Legislature failing to fund enrollment growth, the president of the University of Utah in 2003 said that the institution could not grow anymore and therefore would institute an “enrollment pause” to cap enrollment and not take more unfunded students. (This occurred at the same time that the university had just adopted more stringent admissions requirements.) At the time, the university estimated it already had about 2,800 unfunded students. According to one observer, there was little pushback from the Legislature and governor on this, perhaps because the university has the highest cost per student and the bill runs up quickly when more students enroll.

Fall 2003 enrollment figures show that the university did not increase its head-count numbers from 2002, though it did show a slight increase in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students.<sup>51</sup> The enrollment cap (and steady head-count enrollment) did not affect enrollment at Salt Lake Community College, as one might have expected, given that these are the only two public institutions in Salt Lake City. Enrollments at SLCC did not increase by any more than were initially projected, making it unclear where, if anywhere, students turned away from the university might have gone.

What is perhaps most interesting about the enrollment cap at the University of Utah is how rare such action is at any of the state's institutions. The state's philosophy has traditionally been one of emphasizing access and growth. In the early 1990s when the budget was not going to be sufficient to fund enrollment growth, the USHE argued that it would not be able to enroll the unfunded students. Enrollment figures show, however, that growth did continue despite the lack of funding for enrollment growth in that year.<sup>52</sup> A 1999 editorial in the *Salt Lake Tribune* responding to one legislator's call for Utah Valley State College to put in place enrollment caps if the state did not fully fund enrollment growth reflects the culture of the state:

Lawmakers should view enrollment caps as the last option. The Utah System of Higher Education offers citizens an educational service that many Utahns find of great value. For years, citizens have flocked to colleges and universities in above-average numbers, but their traditional support could erode if enrollment caps that closed the doors for their children and grandchildren were adopted.<sup>53</sup>

This philosophy against turning students away has helped to continue to provide access to students, even during slower economic times.

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<sup>51</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, "2003-2004 Enrollment Reported for Utah's Colleges and Universities," press release, October 22, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Utah System of Higher Education, *Data Book 2003-2004*, Tab C, "Enrollments," Table 40: *Utah System of Higher Education System Total Projection 2002*, (Salt Lake City: 2003), p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> "College Packed," editorial, *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept. 1, 1999, p. A10

## **NEW CENTURY SCHOLARSHIPS**

The governor's office has also signaled its interest in experimenting with new mechanisms of funding—albeit on a small scale. One attempt by former Governor Mike Leavitt to get more students through the higher education system in a more efficient, affordable manner was the adoption of the New Century Scholarship Program. This program, adopted in 1999, says that students who obtain an associate degree by September 1 of the year in which they graduate from high school (by taking lower division college courses while still enrolled in high school) will receive a scholarship covering 75% of tuition for two years at any of the state's public institutions that offer baccalaureate programs. (Scholarships can also be used at the state's private institutions with the scholarship amount equal to 75% of the average costs at the state's public institutions.) In FY2003, \$250,000 was appropriated for the program. To date, there have been 420 New Century Scholarships awarded, and 45 students have completed the program. The numbers are small enough that the scholarships barely hit the radar screen for most of our informants, yet the very existence of such a program provides evidence of the executive branch's ongoing interest in higher education.

## Conclusion

Utah's approach towards higher education policy represents a policymaking process where the outcomes match fairly well the policies that have been implemented. In other words, Utah gets pretty much what you would expect from its higher education system, given the policies it has adopted. As the state looks forward, it is unclear whether the policies and policy approach that it has relied on will continue to be effective. Utah has always emphasized access, but the pressure now to educate more young people and to substantially improve the productivity of the system may put pressure on that commitment.

The long-standing policy of funding enrollment growth has encouraged institutions to expand capacity and establish initial access to higher education as a fundamental priority. This approach works when the money is available— institutions are aggressive about taking on new students when enrollment growth is funded. However, for the past several years, the growth has not been funded, and the mood may be changing. “The state has a history/philosophy of wide open access,” notes one long-time observer of Utah higher education, but “the tough policy question is whether that can be continued,” given fiscal constraints. On the other hand, there is the question of whether political support for higher education might be eroded if the commitment to access was reduced.

The commitment to low tuition, the state's second long-standing policy, is identified by many as a real source of pride for the higher education system. Like most Western states, Utah's philosophy is one of low tuition with relatively low commitment to financial aid. While there has not been much appetite for financial aid that redistributes dollars from some students to others, there has been a general feeling that higher education should be affordable for everyone, and families should not be penalized for having several children in college at the same time. With several years of tight budgets and higher than average tuition increases, Utah may have to rethink its state funding strategies if it is to maintain its traditional emphasis on affordability. A new funding strategy would certainly require a shift in mindset—especially if it more explicitly includes financial aid—but it is clear that the costs of higher education have risen in Utah and the state may need to make changes if it is to continue to emphasize access.

The general policy approach in Utah has been one that focuses on institutional innovations driven by larger state purposes. Enabling two of the two-year colleges to begin offering four-year degrees in targeted areas was a way to address growing demand through an institutional change. Bringing the applied technology colleges under the umbrella of higher education is another example of this kind of institutional focus. The redirection of enrollments towards two-year institutions was an attempt to shift enrollments among existing institutions. As one observer notes, these policies represent tactical responses to particular issues, in some cases motivated by political or regional interests.

The policy approach in Utah also demonstrates a constant tension between the Board of Regents and the Legislature over issues of institutional mission. The state-local tension becomes particularly evident when pressures build in the local communities. While the Legislature has asserted itself at times, in general it has left the regents to manage things operationally.

Even as Utah recovers from the recession of the new millennium, it may be time for the state to consider alternative strategies and policies to maintain the access and affordability that its population demands. It is likely that the state will not be able to resume fully funding growth, and many in Utah seem to think now is the time to consider alternatives. According to state-level projections, Utah can expect the demand for higher education to grow into 2015.<sup>54</sup> This growth may be the mechanism that propels policymakers to consider funding alternatives that incorporate strategies such as financial aid and performance funding. Utah legislators adopted intent language in the 2004 session calling for a review and refinement of the funding formula, reducing emphasis on enrollment growth as the sole incentive for additional funding.

Exploring such strategies may help the state begin a dialogue about how to balance its performance across several categories, and how to address whether the statewide need for higher education is being met. The dialogue must go beyond the Board of Regents, who because of their institutional orientation may be unable to address the statewide priorities without collaboration of others from outside of higher education. A collaborative dialogue may help the state to proactively determine how best to respond to the higher education demands of its unique and growing population.

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<sup>54</sup> Ruppert, Sandra S., *Closing the College Participation Gap: A National Summary, and State Profiles: Utah* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2003).

## **Appendix A**

### **INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FOR UTAH CASE STUDY (SEPTEMBER 2003– JANUARY 2004)**

Bradshaw, Afton  
Brinkman, Paul  
Fitch, Gregory  
Foxley, Cecelia  
Garriott, Boyd  
Hillyard, Lyle  
Huddleston, Robert  
Hunsaker, Fred  
Johnson, Charles  
Karras, Nolan  
Milner, F. Ann  
Morgan, Judd  
Morgan, Anthony  
Mortensen, Brad  
Norris, Chalmers Gail  
Romesberg, Kerry  
Spencer, Mark  
Stauffer, Greg  
Tarbox, Norman  
Thomas, Ryan  
Ward, Lynn  
Winn, Deanna



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*Case Study of Utah Higher Education*, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Mario Martinez (April 2005, #05-1). This report examines state policies and performance in the areas of enrollment and affordability. Compared with other states, Utah has been able to maintain a system of higher education that is more affordable for students, while enrollments have almost doubled over the past 20 years.

*Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education* (September 2004). *Measuring Up 2004* consists of a national report card for higher education (Report #04-5) and 50 state report cards (#04-4). The purpose of *Measuring Up 2004* is to provide the public and policymakers with information to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state. For the first time, this edition of *Measuring Up* provides information about each state's improvement over the past decade. Visit [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org) to download *Measuring Up 2004* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education.

*Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2004* (November 2004, #04-6).

*Ensuring Access with Quality to California's Community Colleges*, by Gerald C. Hayward, Dennis P. Jones, Aims C. McGuinness, Jr., and Allene Timar, with a postscript by Nancy Shulock (April 2004, #04-3). This report finds that enrollment growth pressures, fee increases, and recent budget cuts in the California Community Colleges are having significant detrimental effects on student access and program quality. The report also provides recommendations for creating improvements that build from the state policy context and from existing promising practices within the community colleges.

*Public Attitudes on Higher Education: A Trend Analysis, 1993 to 2003*, by John Immerwahr (February 2004, #04-2). This public opinion survey, prepared by Public Agenda for the National Center, reveals that public attitudes about the importance of higher education have remained stable during the recent economic downturn. The survey also finds that there are some growing public concerns about the costs of higher education, especially for those groups most affected, including parents of high school students, African Americans, and Hispanics.

*Responding to the Crisis in College Opportunity* (January 2004, #04-1). This policy statement, developed by education policy experts at Lansdowne, Virginia, proposes short-term emergency measures and long-term priorities for governors and legislators to consider for funding higher education during the current lean budget years. *Responding to the Crisis* suggests that in 2004 the highest priority for state higher education budgets should be to protect college access and affordability for students and families.

*With Diploma in Hand: Hispanic High School Seniors Talk about their Future*, by John Immerwahr (June 2003, #03-2). This report by Public Agenda explores some of the primary obstacles that many Hispanic students face in seeking higher education, barriers which suggest opportunities for creative public policy to improve college attendance and completion rates among Hispanics.

*Purposes, Policies, Performance: Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State's Public Agenda* (February 2003, #03-1). This essay is drawn from discussions of higher education leaders and policy officials at a roundtable convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University on the relationship between public purposes, policies, and performance of American higher education.

*Measuring Up 2002: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education* (October 2002, #02-7). This report card, which updates the inaugural edition released in 2000, grades each state on its performance in five key areas of higher education. *Measuring Up 2002* also evaluates each state's progress in relation to its own results from 2000. Visit [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org) to download *Measuring Up 2002* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education.

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*State Policy and Community College–Baccalaureate Transfer*, by Jane V. Wellman (July 2002, #02-6). Recommends state policies to energize and improve higher education performance regarding transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions.

***Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education: The Early Years*** (June 2002, #02-5). The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) attained remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects during its early years. This report, prepared by FIPSE's early program officers, describes how those results were achieved.

***Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education*** (May 2002, #02-3). This national status report documents the declining affordability of higher education for American families, and highlights public policies that support affordable higher education. Provides state-by-state summaries as well as national findings.

***The Affordability of Higher Education: A Review of Recent Survey Research***, by John Immerwahr (May 2002, #02-4). This review of recent surveys by Public Agenda confirms that Americans feel that rising college prices threaten to make higher education inaccessible for many people.

***Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns, and Higher Education***, by Patrick M. Callan (February 2002, #02-2). Outlines the major policy considerations that states and institutions of higher education face during economic downturns.

***Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education***, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Patrick M. Callan (January 2002, #02-1). Argues that the structure of California's state higher education system limits the system's capacity for collaboration.

***Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*** (November 2000, #00-3). This first-of-its-kind report card grades each state on its performance in higher education. The report card also provides comprehensive profiles of each state and brief states-at-a-glance comparisons. Visit [www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org) to download *Measuring Up 2000* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education.

***Beneath the Surface: A Statistical Analysis of the Major Variables Associated with State Grades in Measuring Up 2000***, by Alisa F. Cunningham and Jane V. Wellman (November 2001, #01-4). Using statistical analysis, this report explores the "drivers" that predict overall performance in *Measuring Up 2000*.

***Supplementary Analysis for Measuring Up 2000: An Exploratory Report, by Mario Martinez*** (November 2001, #01-3). Explores the relationships within and among the performance categories in *Measuring Up 2000*.

***Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-up to Measuring Up 2000***, by Dennis Jones and Karen Paulson (June 2001, #01-2). Suggests a range of actions that states can take to bridge the gap between state performance identified in *Measuring Up 2000* and the formulation of effective policy to improve performance in higher education.

***A Review of Tests Performed on the Data in Measuring Up 2000***, by Peter Ewell (June 2001, #01-1). Describes the statistical testing performed on the data in *Measuring Up 2000* by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

***Recent State Policy Initiatives in Education: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000***, by Aims McGuinness, Jr. (December 2000, #00-6). Highlights education initiatives that states have adopted since 1997–98.

***Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000***, by Peter Ewell and Paula Ries (December 2000, #00-5). National survey of state efforts to assess student learning outcomes in higher education.

***Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2000*** (November 2000, #00-4).

***A State-by-State Report Card on Higher Education: Prospectus*** (March 2000, #00-1). Summarizes the goals of the National Center's report card project.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education, by John Immerwahr with Tony Foleno (May 2000, #00-2). This report by Public Agenda finds that Americans overwhelmingly see higher education as essential for success. Survey results are also available for the following states:

Great Expectations: How Pennsylvanians View Higher Education (May 2000, #00-2b)  
Great Expectations: How Floridians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2c)  
Great Expectations: How Coloradans View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2d)  
Great Expectations: How Californians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2e)  
Great Expectations: How New Yorkers View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2f)  
Great Expectations: How Illinois Residents View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2h)

**State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support**, by Harold A. Hovey (July 1999, #99-3). This fiscal forecast of state and local spending patterns finds that the vast majority of states will face significant fiscal deficits over the next eight years, which will in turn lead to increased scrutiny of higher education in almost all states, and to curtailed spending for public higher education in many states.

**South Dakota: Developing Policy-Driven Change in Higher Education**, by Mario Martinez (June 1999, #99-2). Describes the processes for change in higher education that government, business, and higher education leaders are creating and implementing in South Dakota.

**Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education**, by John Immerwahr (January 1999, #99-1). Reports the views of those most involved with decision making about higher education, based on a survey and focus groups conducted by Public Agenda.

**The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research**, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness (December 1998, #98-8). Argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

**Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences**, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998, #98-7). Describes the structural relationships that affect institutional effectiveness in higher education, and argues that state policy should strive for a balance between institutional and market forces.

**Federal Tuition Tax Credits and State Higher Education Policy: A Guide for State Policy Makers**, by Kristin D. Conklin (December 1998, #98-6). Examines the implications of the federal income tax provisions for students and their families, and makes recommendations for state higher education policy.

**The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California**, by David W. Breneman (September 1998, #98-5). Argues that California should develop a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

**Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education**, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman, and Leobardo F. Estrada (September 1998, #98-4). Finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

**Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor's Office**, by James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and former governor of North Carolina (June 1998, #98-3). An address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

**The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education**, by John Immerwahr (Spring 1998, #98-2). A national survey of Americans' views on higher education, conducted and reported by Public Agenda.

**Concept Paper: A National Center to Address Higher Education Policy**, by Patrick M. Callan (March 1998, #98-1). Describes the purposes of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.