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Regents approve merger of Tooele ATC into SLCC

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The State Board of Regents Friday approved Commissioner Rich Kendell's recommendation to consolidate Salt Lake Community College and the Salt Lake-Tooele Applied Technology Center.

Merging the efforts of the two colleges will alleviate overlap issues, which are "significant," Kendell said. The merger would also assist with problems of struggling enrollment in the region and high costs of operation.

"The bottom line is that Salt Lake-Tooele Applied Technology College is more expensive any way that you look at the data," Kendell said. The full-time equivalent cost at SLTATC is nearly \$5,000 more than similar offerings per student at SLCC.

It would cost anywhere from \$24 million to \$60 million to give the Tooele campus of Utah's College of Applied Technology what it needs to start up and a build-out is projected in the range of \$89 million to \$140 million.

"Students enrolled at the Salt Lake-Tooele ATC end up in rented facilities, many of which need to be refurbished. In contrast, students enrolled in the same programs at Salt Lake Community College can go to some of the best, state-of-the-art facilities in the state," Kendell said. "They are in a way, disadvantaged."

Already, SLCC provides 33 percent of career and technical education offered to post-secondary students in Utah, the largest percentage of any public school. UCAT occupies about 6 percent of the same market.

"Why incur a cost when we're not really meeting a different need?" Regent David Jordan said. He said it didn't make sense to deliver models that already exist at SLCC.

Results from a study prompting Kendell's recommendation have been more than a year in the making, he said. Multiple entities have been in on the discussion and the overall consensus is that something needed to be done to provide training to the region.

Kendell outlined several conditions of the consolidation during the regents' meeting Friday in Salt Lake City, saying that "every effort would be made to fully integrate the administration and staff at the Salt Lake-Tooele Applied Technology College."

Non-credit and business and industry outreach would maintain its emphasis at SLCC as it has within UCAT programming and the functions and purposes of both the existing SLCC Skills Center and SLTATC facility will also be fully integrated to form one complete system. The applied technology school's budget would also be transferred in whole to help SLCC expand career and technical services in Tooele.

The regents voted unanimously on Friday to move forward with the process of consolidating the two schools and will now seek legislation to change the bylaws of the school's governance structure. The bill will include a "safe harbor" status for six of the eight remaining UCAT campuses to protect them

from the possibility of future consolidation.

A bill file supporting the legislation has been requested by Rep. Kory M. Holdaway, R-Taylorsville.

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