

## 2026 SLCC Legislative Summary

1016 bills introduced

542 bills passed

110 bills tracked by SLCC

### [HB 84 Dangerous Weapon Amendments](#)

This bill prohibits the open carry of weapons on campus. It also allows individuals 21 years of age and older to conceal a weapon on campus even without a concealed carry permit.

### [HB 204 Higher Education Student Belief Accommodation](#)

Requires that faculty must reasonably accommodate a student's absence from an examination or assignment because of a student's religion or conscience or the student's participation in a religious activity. The reasonable accommodation could include:

- 1) excusing participation
- 2) offering an alternative deadline or schedule; or
- 3) offering an alternative examination or assignment

Faculty are not required to provide accommodation for courses mandated for graduation or an academic major **if** the requested accommodation creates a fundamental alteration.

A fundamental alteration means:

A change so significant in an examination, or assignment that the change:

- 1) alters the essential nature, objectives, or standards of a class, program, or degree;  
and
- 2) negatively impacts the student's ability to:
  - master essential learning outcomes of the course, program, or degree; or
  - acquire the knowledge, skills, or competencies necessary to pass the course, program, or degree.

An instructor may not compel a student to publicly take or communicate a specified position on a matter of public concern as the student's own, including by requiring a student to write a letter to a lawmaker, write a letter to an editor, write an article for publication, publish an opinion online or on social media, or create or publish a podcast.

The student would be required to provide written notice to the instructor of the course for the accommodation they are requesting. The instructor then would have to respond to the request as soon as possible. If they agree to the request, they will make appropriate accommodation. If the instructor denies the request, they must notify the student and the institution of the denial, including the reason for the denial, as soon as possible.

An institution **shall establish policies and procedures**, with guidance from the Board of Higher Education, related to these accommodations, including:

Addressing a reasonable timeframe within which:

- A student must submit a request to an instructor; and an instructor must respond to a student's request.

Outlining a process by which an instructor shall, if the instructor denies the student's request for an accommodation:

- notify the institution of the instructor's denial of the student's request.
- provide to the institution a written explanation of why the instructor denied the request.
- designate one or more neutral arbiters with the academic and subject matter expertise necessary to review a denial and determine whether the requested accommodation constitutes a fundamental alteration.

Institutions must:

- Publish on its website, an update annually, the institution's religious and conscience belief accommodation policies.
- Submit an annual report by December 1 of each year, detailing for the previous academic year, any neutral arbiter decisions.
- Report to the Board, no later than December 1, 2026, the institutional policies the institution creates in accordance with this law.

The board of Higher Education shall:

- establish policies to ensure the protection of students sincerely held religious and conscience beliefs; and
- provide guidelines for the institution policies including parameters for the accommodations described in this section and guidance for protecting students sincerely held religious and conscience beliefs.

## HB 352 Higher Education Alignment

The bill requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to organize the institutions of higher education within the state's system of higher education into geographic regions, ensuring both horizontal and vertical integration within the regions. The board is required to consult faculty, staff, and students in developing this alignment.

The board will:

- organize the institutions into regions that include at least one degree-granting institution and one technical college in each region.
- ensure that the vertical integration of institutions provides:
  - articulated programs that guarantee specific courses or credits transfer through course equivalencies for general education, majors, and minors, making the transfer process predictable and reducing credit loss
  - stackable programs that sequentially build upon prior learning to reflect an accumulated set of knowledge and skills
  - integrated admission and enrollment
  - integrated student services
  - opportunities to leverage shared administrative services.
- Identify opportunities for cross-regional and statewide horizontal integration of institutions that promote financial efficiencies and quality and attainable programming by leveraging and aligning:
  - shared academic programs.
  - academic program and degree specialization
  - for research institutions, research opportunities.

## HB 373 Higher Education Innovation

This bill renames the Utah Innovation Fund to the Nucleus Fund. It creates a pilot competitive grant program known as the Education Research Funding Pilot Program. Research institutions are eligible for 75-85% of the awards, and Regional Universities are eligible for 15-25% of the awards. \$50 million was appropriated one-time for this pilot program.

## HB 386 Immigration Amendments

The key component of this bill was originally included in HB 88. It would have removed the exemption from paying the nonresident portion of total tuition for students without lawful immigration status. The bill passed the House but was not considered in the Senate.

## SB 152 Public and Higher Education Collaboration

This bill requires the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Board of Higher Education to establish and implement a process for disclosing grades 7 through 12 student data, including student data from the Utah State Board of Education and education entities to the Utah Board of Higher Education and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to support:

- Secondary student access to college and career readiness programs provided in the Utah System of Higher Education, including:
  - technical college programs
  - early college programs
  - Concurrent enrollment
  - First credential
- Student access to higher education including:
  - scholarships
  - financial aid
  - admission
  - enrollment to Utah System of Higher Education institutions

The state board shall fully implement the process described in this section no later than August 1, 2027.

An LEA shall notify parents of, and how the data that will be collected and the right to opt out of the LEA's disclosure of student data.

## SB195 Workforce Development

This bill establishes the state framework and process for approving Workforce Pell Grant programs and creates a Statewide Youth Apprenticeship Governance Council. It authorizes the Governor to delegate authority to determine eligible workforce programs to the Utah Board of Higher Education in consultation with the Utah Department of Workforce Services and authorizes the Department of Workforce Services to provide wage record data to the Utah Board of Higher Education.

## SB 216 Higher Education Performance and Enrollment Funding

This bill outlines the new performance metrics and enrollment funding formula, as well as requiring the Board of Higher Education to complete a technical college capacity funding framework.

Performance Funding Metrics for Community Colleges beginning July 1, 2027:

- Number of Degrees and Certificates institution awards to high-demand jobs in state (a targeted job; and a strategically important occupation that the board identifies).
- Degrees and certificates the institution awards.
- Percentage of a cohort that completes an award within 150% of the time in which a student typically completes the award at full-time status, measured by awards granted.
- Number of students achieving the student's first 30 credit hours (including CE credits and Prior Learning)

Enrollment Funding

- Only applies if an institution increases or decreases enrollment by at least 1%.
- Calculated using average direct instructional cost per budget-related FTE and average budget-related resident enrollment for the previous 5-year period.

Technical College Capacity Funding Study

- A process for identifying specific technical college programs eligible for state-funded capacity expansion.
- Identifying, validating, and quantifying, by institution and program, unmet:
  - student demand, including secondary and postsecondary students; and
  - employer demand for graduates
- Methodology for establishing the amount and timing of state-funded capacity appropriations, including whether the appropriations are retrospective or prospective
- The availability of alternative funding sources to support capacity expansion.
- Mechanisms for the return of state funds if an institution does not achieve capacity gains; and
- How the capacity framework comports with:
  - enrollment funding and
  - performance funding

- Report the results of the study to the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee before October 1, 2026.

## SB 240 Higher Education Institutional Governance

This bill clarifies and codifies the duties of the Board of Trustees and the institution's legal counsel.

### Board of Trustee Powers and Duties

- Act on behalf of the institution in performing fiduciary and other duties, responsibilities, and functions that either statute or the board authorizes.
- Facilitate communication between the institution and the community.
- In consultation with stakeholders in the institution's region, prepare, approve, and monitor progress on a strategic plan for the institution that aligns with:
  - State attainment goals
  - Workforce needs
  - The institution's role, mission, and distinctiveness
  - Board goals and metrics
  - The Utah Board of Higher Education strategic plan
- Perform duties regarding institutional governance
- Regarding the institution's president:
  - Participate in a presidential search.
  - Establish key performance indicators and annually evaluate the president's performance against the key performance indicators; and
  - Consult the board regarding the president's performance to help the board facilitate the board's responsibility to evaluate presidential performance.
  - Consult with the president regarding the organization and structure of the institution and the organization and governance of faculty, tenure and post-tenure, and other personnel issues.
- Consult with the president and approve a recommendation to the board to annually determine the institution's proposed tuition and general fees.
- Assist the president in executing budget processes, including:
  - approving an annual budget and fund balances
  - planning, implementing, and executing fund raising and development projects for supplementing institutional appropriations; and
  - establishing budgetary policies, including policies regarding benefits and endowment investments; and presidential expenditures, including

thresholds that require notification of expenditures to the board of trustees.

- Review, consider, and approve the institution's awards, credentials, minors, and emphases, including programs in accordance with Section 53H-3-603 and board guidelines and board policies, changes to existing programs, and expedited program approval and termination procedures to meet market needs.
- Approve budgetary and audit policies that are necessary for the effective
- administration of the institution
- Oversee internal audits of the institution, including serving as or creating a subcommittee of the board of trustees to serve as the institution's audit committee.
- Report to the board in accordance with statutory requirements and board policies; and perpetuate and strengthen alumni and community identification with the institution's traditions and goals.

#### Board Support

- The Board of Higher Education shall provide independent, professional staffing and advising support to institutional boards of trustees.

#### Presidential Authority

- A president may appoint or employ administrative officers, other cabinet members, and a general counsel:
  - who are at-will employees
  - who serve the institution in the administrative, cabinet, or general counsel role at the pleasure of the president; and whom the president may remove at any time
- A president may not appoint, contract, hire, or otherwise retain outside legal counsel for the purpose of prosecuting or defending litigation without the written consent of the attorney general or the attorney general's designee.

#### College General Counsel

- College attorneys may not serve in or exercise a role outside the scope of authority that board rules establish or an administrative role, function, or office, except for a primarily legal or regulatory role or as outlined in the board's rules.

## SB 268 Religious Curriculum in Schools

This bill requires that students demonstrate, before receiving a bachelor's degree or teaching credential, the fundamental role of religion in United States history and the primacy of religious liberty to American constitutional government.

This bill will likely require an update to USHE Policy R470–6.2.3 American Institutions

## SB295 Intellectual Diversity in Education and Government (need budget)

This bill clarifies some aspects of HB 261:

- How often the institution is reviewed for compliance with prohibited practices (once every two years)
- Exempts the following from speech restrictions:
  - A presentation or instruction by a guest lecturer in an academic course.
  - A speaker an administrative unit of the institution, faculty member or faculty organization, staff member or staff organization, or student club or organization invites to speak, virtually or in person, at the institution, including a public policy event.
- Requires institutions to host public policy events, including debates, each academic year. The events must:
  - Be open to students, faculty and staff
  - Be open to the general public with some exception
  - Maintain and update a publicly accessible and searchable calendar online that lists all public policy events open to the public
  - Be administered by a formal administrative unit