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Contact: Spencer Jenkins
801-999-0202 | higheredutah.org | twitter.com/higheredutah

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Another round of record enrollment growth for Utah's public colleges and universities

Unprecedented enrollment increases combined with unprecedented budget cuts create uncertainty in maintaining needed quality and access

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) student enrollment for the Spring 2010 semester increased by 13,104 total students over Spring 2009, a 9.48% increase. This is the largest year-over-year increase in USHE history.

An unprecedented enrollment boom combined with historic budget cuts are stretching campus resources, making it difficult to expand capacity to meet the demands of new growth without needed state funding. The result is decreasing services, program eliminations, less course availability, and potential future enrollment caps.

“Our universities and colleges have been tightly managing budget cuts for the past 18 months,” remarked William Sederburg, Commissioner of Higher Education, “our presidents have truly exhibited remarkable leadership in managing such large enterprises in these circumstances.”

“However, we are in uncharted territory,” continued Sederburg. “We are worried about maintaining an affordable quality education in such challenging circumstances. It is very difficult to project how much leaner these institutions can become with such a boom in enrollment combined with the state’s historic budget cuts.”

Utah’s colleges and universities were dealt a historic 17% budget cut in the 2009 legislative session. Those cuts were mitigated with an 8.5% one-time “backfill” from federal stimulus funds that run out in July 2010. Governor Herbert has recommended permanently funding this “backfill” to avoid any further cuts. In contrast, legislative leaders are currently considering cuts as deep as 22% by July 2010.

“The Board of Regents made it clear last November that it supports the Governor’s budget recommendations.” added Jed Pitcher, Chair of the Board of Regents. “Further budget cuts will certainly jeopardize the state’s ability to feed the talent development pipeline needed to keep Utah’s economy competitive.”

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“We are encouraged that legislative leaders recognize the long-term, irreparable impacts of such drastic cuts.” remarked Sederburg. “We are in continuing conversations and hope the cuts won’t run that deep.”

Sederburg concluded, “Higher education is lifeblood to our state. Our campuses provide a valuable opportunity for those impacted by today’s tough economic climate, our presidents are committed to maintaining the needed access to our institutions despite the circumstances.”

Unlike public K-12 schools whose budgets increase based on enrollment, in recent years colleges and universities have not received increased state funding for student enrollment increases. Furthermore, in-state tuition covers only 38% (on average) of a student’s full cost of a college education, highlighting the critical need to maintain state-funded support to make up the remaining 62% cost of services.

The budget-related full-time equivalent (FTE) headcount, which approximates the number of students enrolled full-time per semester (15 semester hours for undergraduate students and 10 semester hours for graduate students), also increased by an historic 11.11% FTE system-wide.

The Utah System of Higher Education includes all of the state’s nine public colleges and universities: The University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State University, Southern Utah University, Snow College, Dixie State College, College of Eastern Utah, Utah Valley University and Salt Lake Community College.

Utah System of Higher Education Total Enrollment Spring 3rd Week 2010

USHE Institution	Total Headcount*				Budget-related FTE**			
	2009	2010	Change	%	2008	2009	Change	%
University of Utah	29,251	30,429	1,178	4.03%	22,328	23,413	1,085	4.86%
Utah State University	21,866	23,229	1,363	6.23%	14,612	15,553	941	6.44%
Weber State University	19,347	20,953	1,606	8.30%	11,115	12,265	1,150	10.35%
Southern Utah University	7,395	7,448	53	0.72%	5,426	5,802	376	6.93%
Snow College	3,541	3,851	310	8.75%	2,281	2,819	538	23.59%
Dixie State College	6,052	7,693	1,641	27.12%	4,144	5,261	1,116	26.93%
College of Eastern Utah	1,790	2,135	345	19.27%	1,223	1,488	265	21.67%
Utah Valley University	23,214	26,322	3,108	13.39%	14,969	17,278	2,309	15.43%
Salt Lake Community College	25,832	29,332	3,500	13.55%	13,832	16,043	2,211	15.98%
USHE Total	138,288	151,392	13,104	9.48%	89,931	99,922	9,991	11.11%

*Headcount can reflect multiple students attending multiple institutions.

**FTE change total rounded to the nearest one (1).