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Enrollment Growth + Budget Cuts = Critical Tipping Point for Utah's Public Colleges and Universities

With largest-ever enrollment increases, campuses are near capacity and quality could suffer in future as budget cuts are fully implemented

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) student enrollment for the Fall 2009 semester increased by 12,632 total students over Fall 2008, an 8.3% increase. This is the largest increase in USHE's 40-year history.

"Campuses are reaching a critical tipping point," reported William Sederburg, Commissioner of Higher Education, "Last year our universities and colleges effectively managed budget cuts amidst record enrollment increases thanks to one-time federal stimulus money. Our college presidents report to me that unless something changes, next school year will be far different."

Utah's colleges and universities were dealt an historic 17% budget cut in the 2009 legislative session. These cuts, along with increased enrollments, are making it increasingly difficult to expand capacity without needed state funding. The result is decreasing services, program eliminations, and less course availability, in effect creating a soft enrollment cap for students.

"The drastic budget cuts have been mitigated in the short-term with one-time federal stimulus money," continued Sederburg, "However, when those federal funds run out next year, the situation becomes more distressing and will directly affect a student's ability to obtain an affordable, quality education."

State tax support for public universities and colleges has decreased more than 10 percentage points in the last decade, which currently funds (on average) 60% of the cost of a student's college education. Unlike K-12 schools whose budgets increase based on enrollment, in recent years colleges and universities have not receive increased funding for student enrollment increases.

"Higher education is facing an unprecedented challenge – the resources our presidents have to maintain quality services to students are becoming severely limited, and while everything is being done to minimize the impact on quality or on our students, there are limits to what can be done." Sederburg observed.

Of particular interest is the 25% increase at Dixie State College where the addition of four-year degrees has led the surge in enrollment. "We're excited because the growth in our enrollment is a harbinger of growth in the economy," commented Stephen Nadauld, Interim

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President at Dixie State College, “In fact, the economy cannot grow unless we produce the educated young men and women for the workforce. The fact that we have such strong enrollment growth sends a very positive signal for this part of the state.”

“Not only are there more students on our campuses, but they are taking larger course loads,” remarked Sederburg. 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 9.61% FTE system-wide.

Sederburg concluded, “We hope these figures drive home the critical point to state leaders that higher education is lifeblood to our state. Our campuses provide a valuable opportunity for those impacted by today’s tough economic climate, highlighting the critical role higher education plays in the economy of our state.”

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 Fall 3rd Week 2009**

USHE Institution	Total Headcount				Budget-related FTE			
	2008	2009	Change	%	2008	2009	Change	%
University of Utah	30,228	31,407	1,179	3.90%	23,184	24,172	988	4.26%
Utah State University	23,925	25,065	1,140	4.76%	15,706	16,327	621	3.95%
Weber State University	21,674	23,331	1,657	7.65%	11,750	12,961	1,211	10.31%
Southern Utah University	7,516	8,066	550	7.32%	5,749	6,141	393	6.83%
Snow College	3,798	4,368	570	15.01%	2,369	2,947	578	24.40%
Dixie State College	6,443	7,911	1,468	22.78%	4,332	5,420	1,089	25.14%
College of Eastern Utah	2,082	2,173	91	4.37%	1,352	1,526	174	12.91%
Utah Valley University	26,696	28,765	2,069	7.75%	15,614	17,483	1,870	11.98%
Salt Lake Community College	29,866	33,774	3,908	13.09%	14,094	16,154	2,060	14.62%
USHE Total	152,228	164,860	12,632	8.30%	93,662	102,663	9,001*	9.61%

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