

The Salt Lake Tribune

New website seeks input on higher ed's future

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Published: October 19, 2010 06:26PM

Updated: October 20, 2010 05:12PM

Higher education leaders are working on a plan to graduate more students from college — and they want your input.

Utah System of Higher Education officials unveiled a new website this week, www.higheredutah2020.org, designed to act as an “online public hearing” on proposals to help meet Utah’s future workforce needs.

Visitors to the site can vote and/or comment on more than 70 ideas by clicking buttons under each idea labeled “like,” “dislike” or “comment.” Users may also submit general comments through the website or participate on wikis — webpages that users may edit and build upon. To comment, users must provide their names and e-mail addresses.

The goal is to help the State Board of Regents develop a plan to make sure 55 percent or more of Utah’s workforce earns at least an associates degree or higher by 2020 and at least 11 percent earn postsecondary certificates. A report released by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce earlier this year said that by 2018, about 66 percent of jobs in Utah will require at least some postsecondary education.

To meet that goal, higher education leaders are proposing ideas centered around five areas: more college/career-ready students; retaining and graduating more students; expanding the capacity of the system; using technology to transform education; and tying higher education to economic growth.

Ideas listed in the action plan on the site under those five prongs include, among others: creating a volunteer core of professionals to provide guidance to students thinking about various careers; encouraging institutions to offer classes and programs on evenings and weekends; and providing feedback to school districts on the higher education success of their graduates.

“We wanted to get kind of this grassroots input to shape the road map for achieving our educational goals,” said Holly Braithwaite, director of communications for the Utah System of Higher Education.

She said officials hope to have a draft for the governor later this month or in November. She said the draft will likely be a working document.

“All of the ideas will be considered for the final product,” she said.

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Sound off on higher education plan

Go to www.higheredutah2020.org to vote on ideas and comment.



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