

R312, Institutional Roles and Missions and Approval of Out-of-Role Instructional Programs¹

R312-1 Purpose: This policy provides general principles for institutional roles in the Utah System of Higher Education (“USHE”), defines roles, and provides guidelines for institutional missions. The policy also establishes a process to seek Utah Board of Higher Education (“Board”) approval of an out-of-role program.²

R-312-2 References

- 2.1 [Utah Code § 53H-1-101](#), Definitions
- 2.2 [Utah Code § 53H-3-1203](#), Technical Colleges – Duties
- 2.3 [Utah Code § 53H-3-609](#), Degree-granting Institutions That Provide Technical Education – Duties – Board Evaluation
- 2.4 [Utah Code § 53H-3-602](#), Establishment of Institutional Roles and General Courses of Study
- 2.5 [Board Policy R165](#), Concurrent Enrollment
- 2.6 [Board Policy R315](#), Designation of Service Regions and Approval of Out-of-Region Instructional Programs, Branch Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, and Extension Centers
- 2.7 [Board Policy R401](#), Approval and Modification of Programs and Administrative Units within Role, Mission, and Designated Service Region
- 2.8 [Board Policy R402](#), Certificate and Degree Award Structures
- 2.9 [Board Policy R411](#), Cyclical Institutional Program Reviews
- 2.10 [Board Policy R510](#), Tuition
- 2.11 [Board Policy R517](#), Course and Program Fees
- 2.12 [Board Policy R701](#), Capital Facilities
- 2.13 [Board Policy R703](#), Acquisition of Real Property

R312-3 Definitions

- 3.1 **“Basic Instruction”** provided by technical colleges, means pre-college-level instruction offered in areas such as reading, language arts, and mathematics, which is necessary for student success in a technical education program. Basic instruction does not include general

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² Technical edits December 1, 2025.

education courses but may parallel developmental education offered by degree-granting institutions.

3.2 “Concurrent Enrollment” is defined by [Board Policy R165, *Concurrent Enrollment*](#).

3.3 “Degree-granting Institution” means an institution described in [Utah Code section 53H-1-102\(1\)\(a\)](#).

3.4 “Developmental Education” means instruction designed to address knowledge and skills gaps necessary for college-level coursework. Developmental education does not grant college credit and is generally numbered below 1000 in the USHE common course numbering system. Developmental education may be eligible for credit and designated at the 1000-level when integrated into or supplementing a college-level course through co-requisite remediation models.

3.5 “Flagship” means the first public higher education institution in Utah.

3.6 “General Education” means a set of essential learning outcomes, the foundational subject areas outlined in [Board Policy R470, *General Education*](#), and the individual courses and the disciplines that comprise those subject areas. The foundational subject areas include written communications, quantitative literacy or mathematics, American Institutions, Humanities, fine arts, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences.

3.7 “Institutional Mission” means an institution’s general purpose and functions as informed by the Board’s strategic goals and the institution’s role(s) designated by section R312-5 of this policy.

3.8 “Lower-division Course” means a course numbered 1000-2999 and expected to be completed during the first 60 credits of study. Lower-division courses offer breadth, foundation, general education, preparation for employment, or preparation for continued study and may serve as prerequisites for upper-division courses.

3.9 “Open Admission” means a nonselective admissions process in which all students with a high school diploma or its equivalent are accepted for admission, regardless of their level of academic preparation for lower-division course work.

3.10 “Polytechnic” means applied academic instruction in the industrial arts, applied sciences, or technical subjects.

3.11 “Program of Instruction” (“Program”) means a for-credit structured curriculum that leads to the knowledge and skills required for a certificate or degree and meets parameters established by institutional accreditation agencies.

3.11.1 “Academic Program” means an educational program offered by a degree-granting institution. An academic program comprises discipline-specific or interdisciplinary courses leading to an intellectual specialty, skills, and experiences necessary for meaningful employment. Academic programs lead to academic certificates or associate, bachelor's, graduate, and professional degrees as defined in [Board Policy R402, Certificate and Degree Award Structures](#). Academic programs are only offered at USHE degree-granting institutions.

3.11.2 “Technical Education Program” means an undergraduate program that prepares students for employment in occupations that do not require a degree and meets the needs of Utah's employers for technically skilled workers. Technical education programs are only offered at USHE institutions that have a technical education role.

3.11.3 Within USHE, "technical education programs" and "academic programs" are also defined based on CIP-Code tables maintained by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (“OCHE”).

3.12 “Regional Demand” means a combination of the following:

3.12.1 Sufficient labor market demand to justify offering the program within the institution's service region, even if other programs exist in the state; or

3.12.2 Modalities that promote program affordability and student access and completion, such as face-to-face and hybrid instruction aimed at local demand.

3.13 “Service Region” means the Utah county/counties for which an institution is authorized under [Board Policy R315, Designation of Service Regions and Approval of Out-of-Region Instructional Programs, Branch Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, and Extension Centers](#) to provide services within its institutional role and within which an institution may establish physical facilities as outlined in [Board Policy R703, Acquisition of Real Property](#).

3.14 “Short-Term Training” means a short-term course of study that meets the community's needs. Such training is not approved by an accrediting body and is designed for skill development that does not lead to a certificate or degree.

3.14.1 “Continuing Occupational Education” means training offered by institutions with a technical college role. This training targets employed adults with education and experience in the relevant occupational area and is designed to meet workforce needs. Continuing occupational education is transcribed and non-credit-bearing.

3.14.2 “Continuing Professional Education” means training offered by degree-granting institutions that target employed adults with education and experience in the relevant occupational area and is designed to meet workforce needs. Continuing professional education is transcribed and may or may not be credit-bearing.

3.14.3 “Community Education” means training offered by USHE institutions to enhance enrollees' personal interests or introduce the community to various training opportunities available at the institution. Community education is not credit-bearing. Such courses may be transcribed and must be financially self-sustaining through student fees as required by [Board Policy R506, *Guidance on Categorizing Budget Related and Self Supporting Courses*](#).

3.15 “Unnecessary Duplication” exists where there is:

3.15.1 Undergraduate Program: An undergraduate program that substantially duplicates the curricular content of a program defined as outside the institution's assigned role; or

3.15.2 Graduate Program

3.15.2.1 A high-cost graduate research program or specialty already existing at another institution and for which existing programs adequately meet present and projected industry demand; or

3.15.2.2 A master's degree program at a regional university for which there is inadequate regional demand.

R312-4 Priorities: The Board prioritizes the value and quality of program offerings and the ability of each institution to fulfill its primary role. The Board shall regularly assess whether each institution is fulfilling its role and whether its role is still relevant and effective.

R312-5 Guiding Principles: The following principles are essential to USHE and should be reflected in institutional roles:

- 5.1 Institutional and programmatic excellence;
- 5.2 Commitment to access and opportunities for all students, including underrepresented, underserved, traditional, nontraditional, secondary, and postsecondary students, as well as students from urban and rural areas;
- 5.3 Efficiency and accountability, including avoiding unnecessary duplication of programs, resources, and effort;
- 5.4 Meeting the state's workforce needs; and
- 5.5 Benefitting surrounding communities.

R312-6 Institutional Roles: Each institution shall operate within its institutional role(s) as designated by this policy and, absent Board approval, shall not offer instruction outside its institutional role(s). The Board's approval of a program or course outside an institution's role shall not constitute a shift in the institution's role(s).

6.1 Technical College

6.1.1 A technical college's role is to:

- 6.1.1.1 Offer technical certificates that meet the needs of Utah's economy and employers while preparing students to enter the workforce;
- 6.1.1.2 Provide open admission for students;
- 6.1.1.3 Provide instruction to postsecondary students;
- 6.1.1.4 Provide dual enrollment opportunities in partnership with secondary schools;
- 6.1.1.5 Provide basic instruction as appropriate to the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the program and industry;

6.1.1.6 Generally admit students year-round, with opportunities to begin most programs at any time on a flexible schedule and advance as they attain competency;

6.1.1.7 Provide continuing occupational education and community education;
and

6.1.1.8 Contribute to the community's and region's quality of life and economic development.

6.1.2 A technical college shall not offer general education or academic programs that lead to an academic certificate or degree.

6.1.3 Bridgerland Technical College, Davis Technical College, Dixie Technical College, Mountainland Technical College, Ogden-Weber Technical College, Southwest Technical College, Tooele Technical College, and Uintah Basin Technical College are technical colleges. Snow College, Salt Lake Community College, and Utah State University (Eastern, Moab, and Blanding) also fill a technical college role in designated service regions.

6.2 Community College

6.2.1 A community college's role is to:

6.2.1.1 Offer academic certificates and associate degrees, focused on lower division teaching and training, that either lead directly to the workforce or prepare students to transfer to baccalaureate programs;

6.2.1.2 Provide open admission for students, and transfer opportunities and degree pathways for technical college students;

6.2.1.3 Provide concurrent enrollment in partnership with secondary schools;

6.2.1.4 Provide developmental education when needed;

6.2.1.5 Provide continuing professional education and community education;
and

6.2.1.6 Contribute to the community's and region's quality of life and economic development.

6.2.2 Salt Lake Community College and Snow College are community colleges.

6.3 Regional University

6.3.1 A regional university's role is to:

6.3.1.1 Offer academic certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and select master's degrees to meet regional demand;

6.3.1.2 Fulfill a community college role and provide community college services for its designated service region, including open student admission and developmental education.

6.3.1.3 Provide transfer pathways and stackable degree options for students from technical colleges and community colleges;

6.3.1.4 Provide scholarly and creative activity to supplement its teaching role and contribute to the region's intellectual and cultural life;

6.3.1.5 Engage in discipline-based scholarly activity;

6.3.1.6 Provide concurrent enrollment in partnership with secondary schools;

6.3.1.7 Provide continuing professional education and community education;
and

6.3.1.8 Contribute to the community's, the region's and Utah's quality of life and economic development.

6.3.2 A regional university shall not duplicate the technical college role or substantively duplicate technical certificates.

6.3.3 Southern Utah University, Utah Tech University, Utah Valley University, and Weber State University fulfill both regional university and community college roles. Utah Tech University also has a polytechnic focus.

6.4 Research University

6.4.1 A research university's primary role is to advance knowledge, drive innovation, discover, create, and impart knowledge through research, teaching, and service. Additionally, a research university shall:

6.4.1.1 Provide academic programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels with a strong emphasis on research;

6.4.1.2 Provide continuing professional education and community education;

6.4.1.3 Contribute to Utah's, the nation's, and the world's quality of life and social, cultural, and economic development; and

6.4.1.4 Foster interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships with other research universities, USHE institutions, industries, government agencies, and other national and international organizations to address complex challenges and societal problems.

6.4.2 Utah State University and the University of Utah, the only two research universities designated by statute, serve as research universities for the entire state. The University of Utah and Utah State University's Logan campus exercise selective admissions.

6.4.3 Special Missions

6.4.3.1 Utah is the state's flagship university. It shall not duplicate the technical college role or substantively duplicate technical certificates.

6.4.3.2 Utah State University is the state's land grant university. As such, it also fulfills a community college role, including open admissions, developmental education, and concurrent enrollment, and a technical college role for designated service regions through its Eastern, Moab, and Blanding campuses.

R312-7 Role Alignment and Exclusive Assignments for Certificate and Degree Offerings

7.1 Programs that do not align with the designations outlined in Table 1 require Board approval.

7.2 The Board may approve and assign a particular institution to offer a specific program based on the institution's designated role and mission.

7.3 An institution's Board of Trustees ("Trustees") may approve a program that falls within the institution's role and designated service region under the process outlined in [Board Policy R401, Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs and Administrative Units within Role, Mission, and Designated Service Region.](#)

Table 1 – Role Alignment

	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	Regional Universities	Utah State University	University of Utah
Technical Certificate	X	X ³		X ⁴	
Academic Undergraduate Certificate		X	X	X	X
Associate Degree		X	X	X	
Bachelor's Degree			X	X	X
Select Master's Degrees That Meet a Regional Demand			X		
Master's Degrees (Research and Professional)				X	X
Post-Bachelor's/Post-Master's Academic Certificate			X	X	X
PhD				X	X
JD					X
MD					X
DDS					X
EdD				X	X
DVM				X	
Other Professional Doctor Degrees				X	X

R312-8 Accreditation: All institutions shall maintain accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities or the Council on Occupational Education. Institutions shall also hold programmatic accreditation for programs when applicable and appropriate.

R312-9 Community Outreach: All institutions engage and enhance their surrounding communities through outreach activities, such as cultural, social, artistic, economic, personal, and professional development, appropriate to their designated roles.

R312-10 Institutional Mission Statements: In consultation with its Trustees, each institution shall develop a statement outlining its institutional mission. Each institution must seek the Board’s approval of its institutional mission statement, including any updates, to ensure alignment with the institution’s role(s) and the state’s goals and priorities for higher education.

³ Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, and USU’s Eastern, Moab, and Blanding campuses are the only degree-granting institutions that have a technical college role and provide technical certificates.

⁴ Utah State University may only offer technical certificates at its Eastern, Moab, and Blanding campuses as outlined in Board Policy R315, *Designation of Service Regions and Approval of Out-of-Region Instructional Programs, Branch Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, and Extension*.

R312-11 Board Out-of-Role Program Approval Process

11.1 Program Proposal: An institution seeking to either develop a new out-of-role program or propose changes to an existing program that would make it an out-of-role program shall submit a program proposal to OCHE using the electronic template provided and must follow all the steps outlined in [Board Policy R401, Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs and Administrative Units within Role, Mission, and Designated Service Region](#) through its Trustees before forwarding the proposal to the Board for approval.

11.2 OCHE Assessment: OCHE shall provide an assessment of the proposed out-of-role program for the Board, including:

11.2.1 Labor market demand for the program, including whether there is sufficient workforce demand to justify programming at multiple institutions when similar programs are in place at other USHE institutions;

11.2.2 Regional and student need for access to the program, including:

11.2.2.1 Whether the proposed program involves the transformation of an existing, well-performing program into a higher award level due to a shift in occupational or licensure demands that requires the program to be scaled up to remain relevant; and

11.2.2.2 Whether the requesting institution has thoroughly explored a partnership with a USHE institution authorized to provide the program and a partnership has been determined to be infeasible;

11.2.3 The potential impact on enrollment patterns at other institutions with similar programs;

11.2.4 Institutional capacity considerations, including whether the institution will build the program from an existing program or will be entirely new and require new faculty, facilities, and other resources; and

11.2.5 How well the requesting institution performs in its primary institutional role(s) as measured by accreditation reviews, the financial feasibility of the institution and the proposed program, USHE's performance metrics, and other metrics determined by the Board.

11.3 Trustees' Decision: After reviewing the OCHE assessment and attendant materials from the [R401](#) process, the Trustees will decide whether to modify the proposal to the Board or withdraw it. If the Trustees do not forward the proposal, the proposal will not be approved.

11.4 Board Approval Considerations

11.4.1 When determining whether to approve or deny an out-of-role program, the Board will review the proposal and the OCHE Assessment and may request more information or consultation as necessary. The Board shall consider:

11.4.1.1 Whether the program is the best use of state resources;

11.4.1.2 Whether the program, if approved, would unnecessarily duplicate existing program(s); and

11.4.1.3 Whether all possibilities of partnership with an institution with the appropriate role have been exhausted.

11.5 Board Discretion: The Board may direct another institution within the appropriate role to explore developing a new program in partnership with the requesting institution instead of approving a new out-of-role program. When directed by the Board, the exploring institution shall report to the Board whether developing a new program is feasible and shall include support for its position in its report.

11.6 Budget Requests: Board approval of an out-of-role program does not constitute approval of a special budget request necessary to fund the program, such as differential tuition or building appropriations to support programming. Institutions shall submit special budget requests to the Board under relevant Board policies, including [R510, Tuition](#), [R517, Course and Program Fees](#), and [R701, Capital Facilities](#).