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Lumina Foundation awards State Board of Regents grant for defining quality in higher education

Funding allows Utah to continue efforts for better-educated workforce

SALT LAKE CITY – In the last decade, the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) has emerged as a national leader in defining general education learning outcomes, competencies and common course numbering for better transferability throughout Utah’s state colleges and universities. Because of this groundbreaking work, **the Utah Board of Regents has received a \$390,000 grant from Lumina Foundation to use in expanding efforts to define quality in higher education, a process also known as Tuning.** Tuning is a transparent process that informs students, parents and policy makers about what a student must know, understand and be able to do at each degree level. Because of its intentional approach to learning outcomes and student demonstration of competencies, Tuning better prepares graduates for citizenship and the workforce.

“The Tuning process in higher education helps faculty understand the relevance of their own work, how it translates to student experience and ultimately what employers do with those credentials,” said Dr. Phyllis Safman, Assistant Commissioner of Higher Education who, with Drs. Janice Gygi and William Evenson lead the Tuning Project in Utah. “This type of teaching takes into account what employers need and want from our graduates.” Additionally, policymakers may benefit from Tuning so they may better allocate resources based on an understanding of what degrees mean to students, institutions and society.

Tuning is a faculty driven, collaborative method that shifts traditional instruction to an explicit process of identifying learning outcomes, competencies, and how students might demonstrate mastery using hands-on, high impact practices such as group projects and service learning. Thus, skills and knowledge are transparent at every degree level – associate’s, bachelor’s and master’s.

To date, Utah’s institutions have successfully Tuned physics and history at Utah’s eight state institutions. This Lumina Foundation grant will help faculty in elementary education and general education math drill into the competencies and learning outcomes necessary to align college-level courses with the Common Core State Standards at the public colleges and universities as well as Brigham Young University and Westminster College. Participating faculty will then share their Tuning experience with their departments, introducing their colleagues to the Tuning approach.

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About Lumina Foundation for Education: Lumina Foundation is an Indianapolis-based private foundation dedicated to expanding access to and success in education beyond high school.

About The Utah System of Higher Education: USHE includes all of Utah's eight public colleges and universities: The University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State University, Southern Utah University, Snow College, Dixie State College, Utah Valley University and Salt Lake Community College. For more information on the Utah System of Higher Education, visit our website at <http://www.higheredutah.org>.