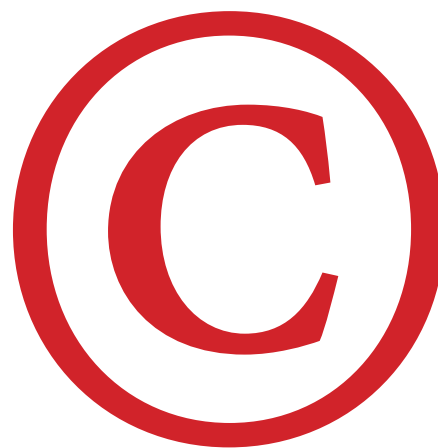


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# Resume new program development in Utah higher education

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In November 2002, the state Board of Regents placed a moratorium on new program development at Utah System of Higher Education institutions. The stated rationale for the moratorium was that the duplication of programs within the system is an inefficient use of scarce tax revenue.

Next month, the Regents will vote on whether to lift the moratorium. The moratorium affects all schools in the Utah System of Higher Education in different ways, but by looking at the adverse effects it has had at Utah Valley State College, it becomes clear that ending the moratorium is to the advantage of Utah taxpayers.

First, the moratorium defeats the higher education system's mission by restricting UVSC from fully actualizing the directive it was given in 1993, when the Regents widened the school's mission from a community/vocational college to a comprehensive, two-tiered institution comprised of certificate, associate and baccalaureate programs.

This move was the right one due to the changing educational needs of Utah County. In the past, Brigham Young University was generally accessible to local students, but admission standards there have become increasingly selective. Since many Utah Valley residents are unlikely to commute or move in order to pursue a degree that UVSC does not offer, providing access to diverse curricula is now the college's responsibility.

Over the past decade, UVSC has made impressive advances with regard to its comprehensive mission. This progress is reflected in the fact that for two years in a row, *US News & World Report* has named UVSC one the best public comprehensive four-year colleges in the West.

Simply put, Utah taxpayers benefit from the Utah System of Higher Education supporting UVSC in realizing its potential.

Second, in a culture supposedly committed to the ideal of free markets uninhibited by bureaucratic interference, top-down control seems misplaced. UVSC should be trusted to respond to community needs as the school sees fit. As UVSC President William A. Sederburg has publicly stated, to inhibit the college from responding to ever-changing community needs on account of a stagnant economy is akin to a computer software company shutting down its research and development department due to tough financial times. UVSC responds to community needs by developing new programs and eliminating outdated ones.

Third, the moratorium is inconsistent with the essence of liberal arts education. A traditional liberal arts curriculum is holistic in that it forms an interlinking web of curriculum which is mutually supportive. Strong degree programs benefit the entire campus community, not just majors of particular programs.

This is to say that students benefit from strong programs outside of their majors. Political science majors benefit from a strong history program. Philosophy majors benefit from a strong English program. Psychology majors benefit from a strong biology program.

These three points can be summarized in one conclusion: Utah state taxpayers benefit from UVSC realizing its full potential as a comprehensive college for many social and economic reasons. Analysts foresee a rising and sustained demographic tide in the school-age population. Now is the time for education leaders to prepare for this eventuality, not when the wave breaks.

To be sure, it is not UVSC's proper role within the higher ed system to aspire to be a research institution like the University of Utah with medical, law, and engineering schools. Rather, the proper role of UVSC is to be one of the region's top comprehensive colleges.

Certainly there is no reason for UVSC or other institutions within the Utah system to duplicate certain kinds of expensive and specialized professional programs that characterize big research institutions. But insofar as the moratorium inhibits UVSC from fulfilling its mission as a quality, student-centered, comprehensive four-year college, it is short-sighted and should be rescinded. ---

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