



UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# SPRING 2022 CSEAC REPORT

April 2022

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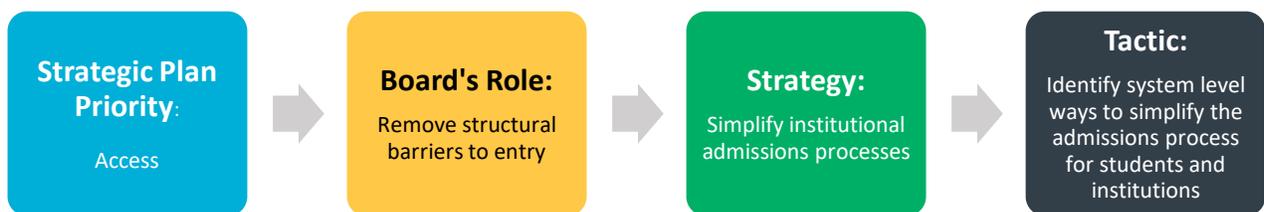
## Background

The Utah Board of Higher Education is committed to engaging stakeholders as it operationalizes its [Strategic Plan](#). The Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council is one way the Board ensures the largest stakeholder group in higher education – students – have an opportunity to share their perspectives and voice their recommendations on systemwide initiatives. In this spirit of demonstrating respect for students’ time and insights, the Commissioner’s staff will produce a report at the end of each semester outlining how CSEAC discussions have informed the Board’s work and what action items the Board and the Commissioner’s office have identified to help address students’ concerns.

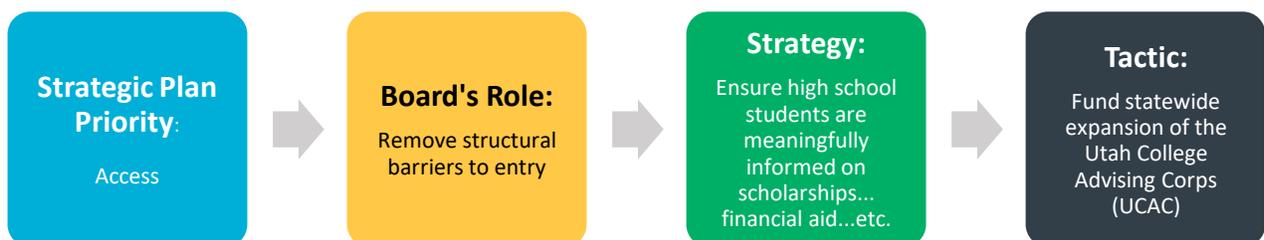
## Financial Aid Communications (February 2022 Meeting)

On February 18, CSEAC members discussed their experiences with financial aid-related communications from their institutions; the Commissioner’s office then [synthesized and coded](#) the qualitative data from this discussion.

### Existing Strategic Plan efforts informed by CSEAC feedback



In April 2022, the Board deployed a 15-month Simplify Admissions Taskforce to identify ways to streamline the admissions process across USHE institutions; this includes enhancing the financial aid offer communications students receive as part of the admissions continuum.



The Board is invested in employing a near-peer college adviser in every Utah high school. In the 2021-2022 school year, UCAC advisers serve over 50 high schools and help seniors through the process of transitioning into college. The Commissioner's staff, in coordination with institutional financial aid offices, train UCAC advisers, as well as other counselors and educators, about multiple college access and financial aid processes, including an April 2022 training about how to help 12<sup>th</sup> graders understand their financial aid offers.

#### **Future action items the Board may consider**

- Identify national and statewide best practices for communicating financial aid offer information and work with institutions to incorporate these practices; prioritize the unique needs of underrepresented student populations when generating this list of best practices.
- Add a new tactic to the Board's Strategic Plan prioritizing training for college access professionals. Training will include (but will not be limited to) understanding financial aid offers, assisting undocumented students in finding scholarships, and understanding eligibility requirements for state aid and scholarships.

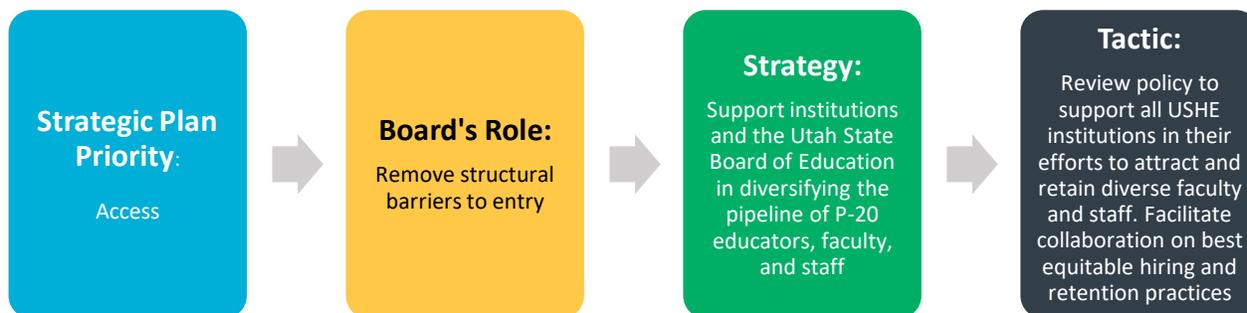
#### **Relaying feedback to the Utah Board of Higher Education and institutional leaders**

- Board Members Tanner Marcum and Valirie Serawop and CSEAC Vice Chair Tiffany Chan shared key takeaways in the February 18 Board of Higher Education Student Affairs Committee [meeting](#).
- Katie Mazzie, Director of Student-Centered Initiatives, shared key takeaways in a March 3 institutional financial aid directors meeting.
- The Commissioner's Office staff will continue to revisit CSEAC's feedback (as needed) in monthly institutional Financial Aid Directors meetings. Future discussions may include how the Board can support institutions in:
  - Recruiting and retaining staff fluent in multiple languages
  - Educating students about aid appeal processes in times of severe financial hardship
  - Cross-training academic advisors about financial aid

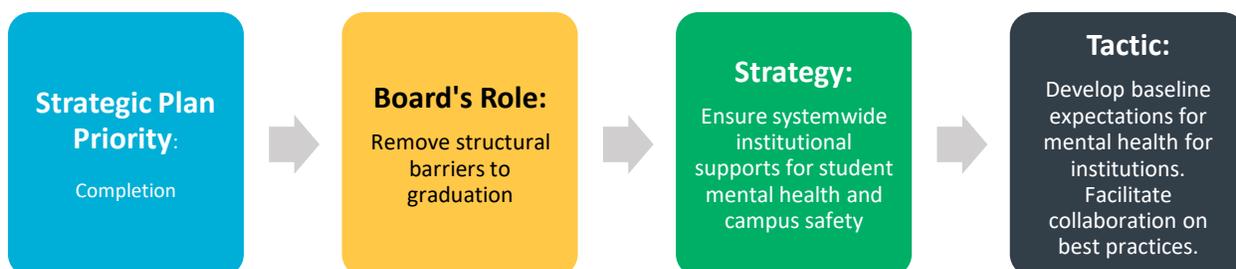
## **Student Mental Health (March 2022 Meeting)**

On March 18, CSEAC members discussed institutional culture and resources pertaining to mental health; the Commissioner's Office staff then [synthesized and coded](#) the qualitative data from this discussion.

## Existing Strategic Plan efforts informed by CSEAC feedback



This element of the Board’s Strategic Plan aligns with CSEAC’s feedback that faculty and staff should be held more responsible for promoting mental health resources and demonstrating compassion and care for students. As the diversity of representation and lived experiences improve on campus, an enhanced sense of connection and belonging should be a natural byproduct of that diversity.



In order to fulfill its strategic plan priority of supporting students’ mental health, the Board:

- Collected five-year [mental health plans](#) from all of USHE’s degree-granting institutions.
- Has remained a steadfast partner in ensuring the success of the [SafeUT app](#).
- Secured legislative funding to expand peer mentoring services and mobile health (MH1) crisis intervention services on USHE campuses.
- Established a partnership with the [Huntsman Mental Health Institute](#). HMHI combats the stigma surrounding mental health by convening committees of college and university partners and facilitating the [Healing Out Loud](#) student film contest.
- Established a partnership with the [Jed Foundation](#). JED has conducted a campus climate survey with all USHE’s degree-granting institutions and is currently conducting the same survey with USHE’s technical colleges. Following that survey, JED conducts a follow-up visit with each campus and helps steer them toward resources or best practices to address their campus’s specific needs. An annual, multi-day convening of all JED partner institutions will take place in late 2022, where institutional representatives will discuss mental health concerns and practices
- Participates in meetings twice per month with representatives from JED, SafeUT, and HMHI to coordinate and align efforts.

### Future action items the Board may consider

- Continue to convene partners and empower campuses in their existing passion for this issue.
- Continue to advocate for mental health services as a priority in Utah.

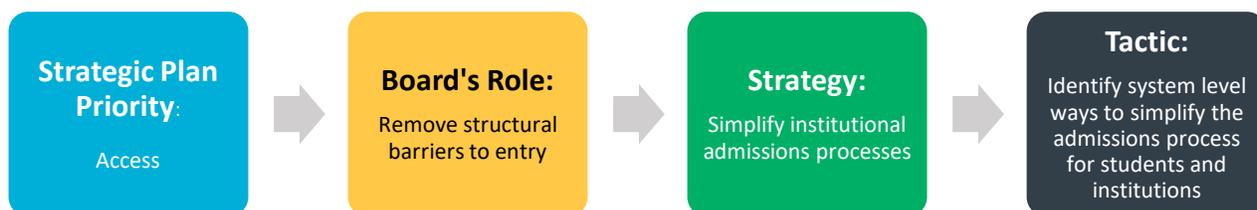
### Relaying feedback to the Board and institutional leaders

- Board member Tanner Marcum and CSEAC member Chris Westwood shared key takeaways in the April 15 Board of Higher Education Student Affairs committee [meeting](#).
- The Commissioner’s staff will continue to revisit CSEAC’s feedback as needed with key stakeholders, while still respecting the fact that campuses are trying to provide relevant and timely mental health services for students at a time when increasing demand and limited resources make it difficult to make quick headway.

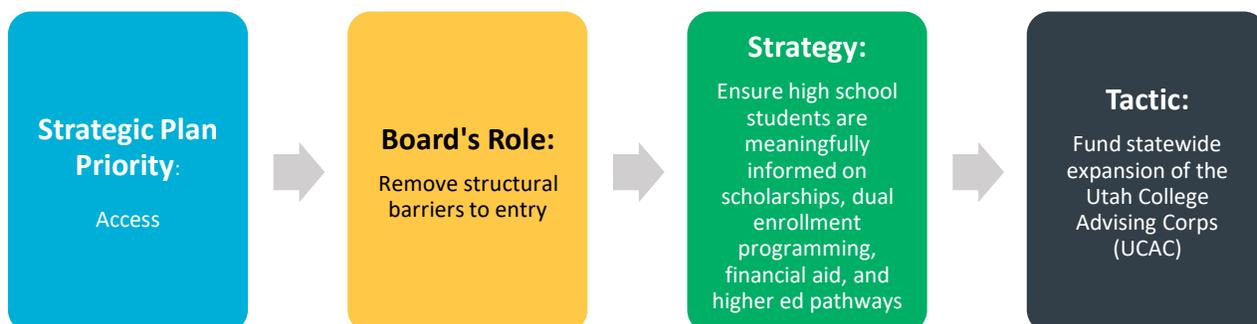
## Transitioning into Postsecondary Education (March and April 2022 Meetings)

On March 31 and April 11, CSEAC members discussed their experiences with transitioning into postsecondary education; the Commissioner’s office staff then synthesized and coded the qualitative data from this discussion.

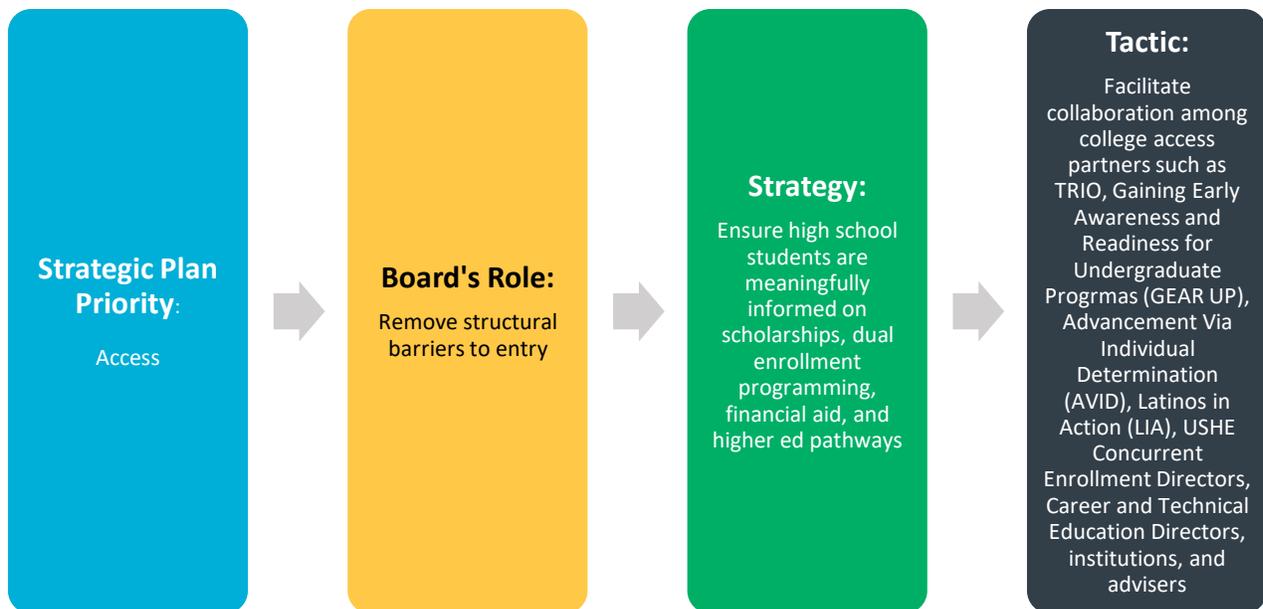
### Existing Strategic Plan efforts informed by CSEAC feedback



In April 2022, the Board deployed a 15-month Simplify Admissions Taskforce to identify ways to streamline the admissions process across USHE institutions. Simplifying the admissions process will address many of the concerns CSEAC members voiced in this meeting, including concerns about arduous processes and concerns that application fees create barriers to entry for low-income students.



As the Board continues to support the expansion of UCAC into Utah high schools, more high school seniors will receive the hands-on guidance they need to make educated decisions about their postsecondary plans. This strategy also aligns with CSEAC’s feedback that peers and near-peers are often the most effective and engaging messengers in postsecondary planning discussions.



Beginning in fall 2022, the Commissioner’s office will help convene networks of college access professionals across eight geographic regions in the state. Partners in each region will meet three times per year to align efforts, set and work toward equitable college access goals, and participate in professional development and training. Partners from all eight regional networks will attend a convening in spring 2023 to network and discuss best practices. One of the goals of this project is to ensure all college access professionals have the tools they need to help students successfully transition into and afford postsecondary education.

**Future action items the Board may consider**

- As the Commissioner’s staff train college access professionals, they can incorporate CSEAC’s suggestion to emphasize the importance of maintaining positivity and excitement in postsecondary planning discussions, as opposed to the current problematic practice of exaggerating postsecondary rigidity as a strategy for preparing students for postsecondary rigor

**Relaying feedback to the Board and institutional leaders**

- Board member Tanner Marcum will share key takeaways in the June 17 Board of Higher Education’s Student Affairs committee meeting.
- The Commissioner’s Office will continue to revisit CSEAC’s feedback as needed with key institutional stakeholders. Future discussions may include how the Board can support institutions in:
  - Fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging in recruitment processes

- Educating students about campus resources in settings beyond orientation