



UTAH SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

GENERAL REPORT

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CSEAC Report, Fall 2022

The Utah Board of Higher Education is committed to engaging stakeholders as it operationalizes its [Strategic Plan](#). The Board utilizes its [Equity Lens Framework](#), which recognizes that it is important to purposefully involve campus and community stakeholders affected by the Board’s potential courses of action. The Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council is one way the Board ensures members of the largest stakeholder group in USHE—students—have an opportunity to share their perspectives and provide recommendations on systemwide initiatives. In the spirit of demonstrating respect for students’ time and insights, the Commissioner’s staff produces a report at the end of each semester outlining how CSEAC discussions help inform the Board’s work and how this feedback is shared with relevant parties.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Efforts and Resources for Students with Disabilities (October 2022 Meeting)

In October, CSEAC members shared their thoughts on how students with disabilities experience and interact with their institutions; the Commissioner’s office then [synthesized and coded](#) the qualitative data from this discussion.

Existing Strategic Plan Efforts that Align with CSEAC Feedback



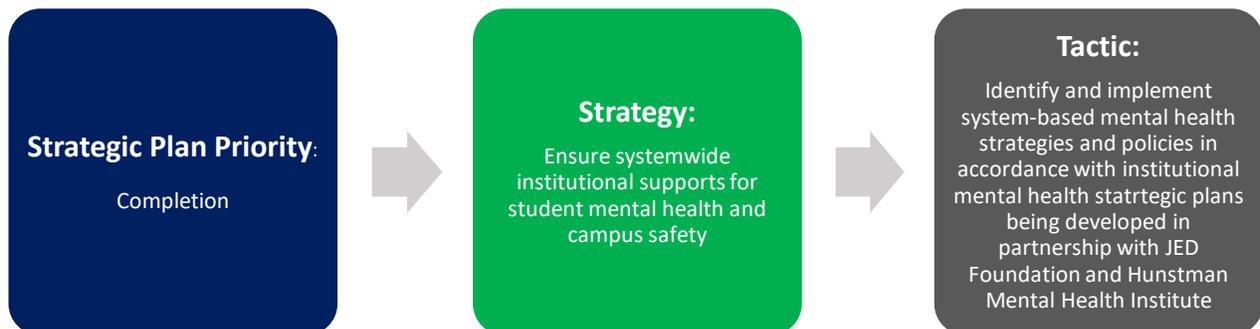
Staff at the Commissioner’s office regularly provide training for high school counselors, college advisers, and other college access and community outreach professionals. This includes training for K-12 educators and community groups who work with students with disabilities so they can provide students and families with specialized instruction on how to prepare and pay for college and how to access relevant resources once they enroll. The Commissioner’s office staff also created a directory including the disability services offices at all of Utah’s colleges and universities and disseminated this resource to high school counselors and college advisers.

Commissioner’s office staff will commit to enhancing this training in the following ways:

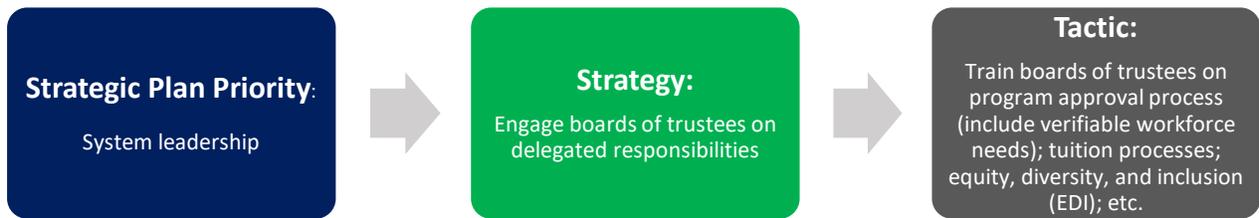
- Inform more K-12 educators of the custom programming and activities institutions offer students with disabilities, such as [Wolverines Elevated](#) at Utah Valley University, [Aggies Elevated](#) at Utah State University, [Creating Achievement Through Transition \(CATT\)](#) at Weber State University, and others.
- Inform more access partners that students with disabilities may be eligible for [TRIO services](#).



For the 2023 legislative session, the Board is requesting \$975,000 in ongoing appropriations to fund Student Wellness Resource Navigators across USHE. If funded, these Student Wellness Resources Navigators will conduct outreach across campus and case-manage with students to help them discover and secure the resources they need to thrive in college, including resources for students with disabilities.



CSEAC students shared that, where appropriate, mental health should be considered as institutions strategize how to support students with disabilities. One student cited long waitlists at their campus counseling center and described how, for students who need accommodations when mental health challenges disrupt their learning, “providing evidence of diagnosis by a mental health provider to access the Disability Resource Center can be a barrier.” The Board is committed to ensuring students have the mental health resources they need to engage in their education and complete college. This includes requesting over \$2 million in ongoing appropriations during the 2023 legislative session to help fund virtual therapy sessions for every matriculated student in USHE. Feedback from this meeting will continue to validate and fortify the Board’s efforts around student mental health.



One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the October CSEAC meeting is the idea that, in EDI discussions and efforts, disability is too often forgotten or is given much less attention than other components of identity and lived experience (such as race or gender). This important feedback can help guide the Board and Commissioner’s office as they develop and facilitate EDI training for the institutional boards of trustees.

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

- The Associate Commissioner for Access and Student Affairs hosts regular meetings with institutional Senior Student Affairs Officers and will commit to providing SSAOs with a summary of CSEAC feedback each semester so that they can share the feedback with relevant staff at their institutions.
- The Assistant Commissioner for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion leads regular meetings with institutional Chief Diversity Officers and will commit to providing CDOs with a summary of CSEAC feedback each semester so that they can share the feedback with relevant staff at their institutions.

Affordability (November 2022 Meeting)

In November, CSEAC members shared their thoughts about college affordability; the Commissioner’s office then [synthesized and coded](#) the qualitative data from this discussion.

Existing Strategic Plan Efforts that Align with CSEAC Feedback



The Board, Commissioner’s office, and USHE institutions are working to:

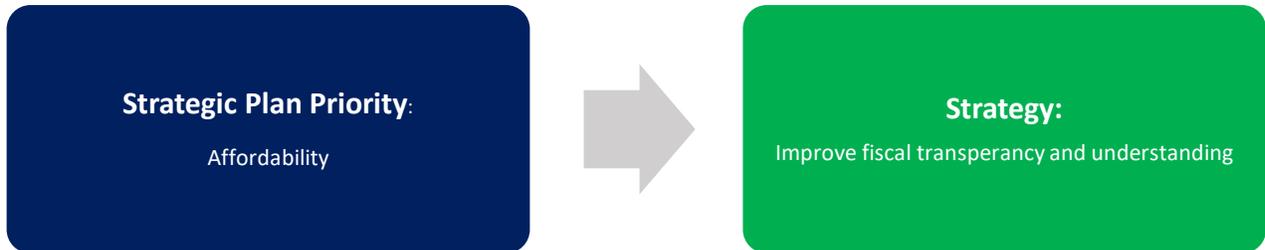
- *Review and analyze the use of tuition waivers and identify opportunities for enhancing their efficacy*

- *Evaluate, prioritize, and implement state student financial aid and scholarships:* The Commissioner’s office administers [14 state aid programs](#) and is continuously striving to improve equitable access to this aid. For example, the largest Utah state aid program (the Opportunity Scholarship) replaced previous programs with simplified requirements and an easier application process. This benefits students because the requirements are easier to follow, and the advanced courses required to qualify for the scholarship are quantifiably tied to college success. There is also a large effort underway to collect standardized data for all state aid programs to identify and address existing equity gaps.
- *Streamline the statewide House Bill 144 affidavit process. Benchmark student participation in affidavits. Clarify how citizenship data is collected and used in relation to scholarships and admissions forms:* House Bill 144 is the law stipulating that eligible undocumented students may qualify for in-state tuition. This tactic includes work to benchmark student participation in H.B. 144 affidavits and strives to clarify how citizenship data is collected and used in relation to scholarships and admissions forms to ensure the system has the information they need to customize resources to meet students’ needs while protecting their privacy. In 2022, the Utah Dreamers Coalition worked with USHE legal counsel to provide colleges with simplified and standard H.B. 144 guidelines. These guidelines ensure a less burdensome process for students where colleges utilize student transcript information for the majority of the affidavit and only ask students to complete the document once throughout their college trajectory at a USHE institution. Further streamlining of this process is expected to take place within the Board’s Simplified Admissions Taskforce initiative.



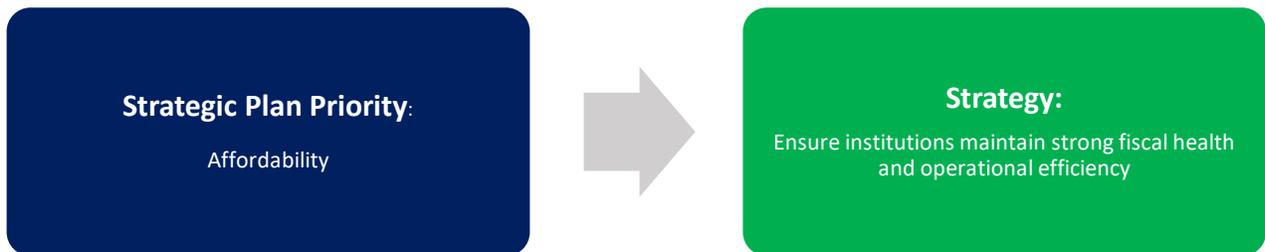
The November CSEAC discussion revealed that, while FAFSA processes are imperfect, the FAFSA is critical in helping many students afford the cost of attending higher education. The Board recently supported a business case in which the Utah State Board of Education (K-12) will request funding during the 2023 legislative session to provide participating public high schools with performance grants to measurably increase their FAFSA completion rates among 12th graders. The Commissioner’s office also partners with institutional financial aid offices and local high schools to host FAFSA completion events across the state where students and their families receive help filing the FAFSA. This year, over 150 Utah high schools hosted a FAFSA completion event, and USHE institutions sent a record number of volunteers to assist. Additionally, staff at the Commissioner’s office provide in-depth and year-round financial aid and FAFSA training for hundreds of high school counselors, college access professionals, and community organizations. Based on CSEAC feedback from the November meeting, the Commissioner’s

office will commit to enhancing these trainings by providing more context for high school staff about the nuances of paying for college, particularly with information about lesser-known costs, such as differential tuition or the possibility that a student may need to buy special supplies for their program of study (e.g., architectural drafting materials).



The Board, Commissioner’s office, and USHE institutions are working to:

- *Develop and implement full cost of attendance reporting standards and tools:* This tactic will ensure that students are provided with more clear information about the direct and indirect costs of their education, regardless of which USHE institution they choose to attend. Several CSEAC members expressed concerns about differential tuition and described confusion about why these elevated costs were justified. This feedback is helpful as the Board seeks to operationalize this tactic and elevate transparency around college costs.
- *Refine the Board’s standard of affordability:* The Commissioner’s office is working to refine its standard of college affordability to ensure it is more aligned with the economic factors presently affecting Utah’s communities.



During the November CSEAC discussion, one student explained that, in their opinion, college can be considered affordable when the education and services an institution provides are of high enough quality that students feel they’re getting what they’re paying for. The Board strives to deliver on this expectation by ensuring that when students pay to attend an institution, they can expect that institution to be fiscally sound and capable of providing the high-quality educational experience the student is seeking.



The Board has supported the statewide expansion of the UCAC program, which places a near-peer college adviser in high schools to assist 12th graders navigate the path to college, including individualized support with scholarship applications, FAFSA, H.B. 144 affidavits, and more. UCAC advisers provided one-on-one assistance to over 15,000 high school seniors in the 2021-22 school year.



CSEAC members described food, housing, and transportation as some of the most prevalent financial concerns for students as they attempt to balance paying for college with meeting their basic needs. As stated earlier, during the 2023 legislative session, the Board is requesting \$975,000 in ongoing appropriations to fund Student Wellness Resource Navigators across USHE. If funded, these Student Wellness Resources Navigators will conduct outreach across campus and case-manage with students to help them connect with the resources they need to thrive in college. This will include helping students have access to campus food pantries, apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), secure childcare assistance, address their emergency housing needs, and much more. The Commissioner’s office staff also lead a consortium group of campus food pantry staff who meet quarterly to share best practices and strategize how to improve food security on USHE campuses.

Relaying Feedback to the Utah Board of Higher Education and Institutional Leaders

- Student Board members Xitlalli Villanueva and Korianne Gibson [presented](#) a summary of the November CSEAC discussion to the Board’s Student Affairs Committee on December 16. Student Affairs Committee members were also provided with a copy of the [full report](#) from the November CSEAC meeting.
- Staff on the Scholarship Team at the Commissioner’s office lead a monthly consortium group of USHE institutional financial aid directors and will distribute the [November CSEAC](#) report with this group following its January meeting.
- The Board’s [March meeting](#) topic will center around affordability, and CSEAC feedback will be shared during that discussion.

- The Associate Commissioner for Access and Student Affairs hosts regular meetings with institutional Senior Student Affairs Officers and will commit to providing SSAOs with a summary of CSEAC feedback each semester so that they can share the feedback with relevant staff at their institutions.
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