

January 14, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Utah College Application Week

Background

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC), is national initiative of the American Council on Education (ACE), to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. The purpose of this initiative is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one college admissions application during the school day throughout the designated week.

The ACAC initiative began in 2005, in a single GEAR UP North Carolina high school in Chatham County. In the spring of 2013, Assistant Commissioner, Melissa Miller Kincart, was approached about piloting this program in Utah with support of the College Access Network of Utah (CANU). In November 2013, eight Utah high schools in three districts joined 39 states and the District of Columbia in participating in the American College Application Campaign. In 2014 the Utah College Application Week program (UCAW) expanded to 48 high schools in 15 districts and one charter school.

Issue

The goal of Utah College Application Week is to provide every high school senior at our partner schools the opportunity to complete at least one viable college or university application during the school day in a school computer lab or library. A special focus was placed on students who would be the first in their families to attend, low-income students, or students who may not have otherwise considered applying. In the spring of 2014, the Outreach and Access Department of the Commissioner's Office assembled a steering committee for Utah College Application Week comprised of members from the College Access Network of Utah, district representatives, admissions directors and outreach staff from Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) institutions and Westminster College, and access programs such as GEAR UP and Utah College Advising Corp. Based on feedback from the 2013 campaign, we selected two full weeks in November for the UCAW program; November 10-14 for awareness events and activities, and November 17-21 for application completion. It was also decided that this year's program participants would have the opportunity and support to register for their FAFSA PIN number.

On May 20, 2014, USHE launched the Utah College Application Week program at a training meeting for high school site teams. The Utah College Application Week Program Manager, Heidi Doxey, under direction of Assistant Commissioner, Melissa Miller Kincart created a 100 page Site Coordinator Training and Implementation Manual which contains information and templates for participating high schools to use to develop their own plan for incorporatingUCAW programming in their school. The manual includes: timelines, pre-event awareness and activities, application requirements, fees and waiver information, PR and media guidelines, program models, data tracking requirements, and post-UCAW programming such as FAFSA Completion and College Decision Day. Additionally, templates for letters, postcards, social media posts, and other documents on financial aid for parents and students were developed and distributed electronically soUCAW site coordinators could edit with their own school-specific information. On September 23 and 24 we provided additional training for site coordinator teams via an in-person training at the Office of the Commissioner and through an online webinar. Attendees were given additional training support on FAFSA PIN registration, the nuts and bolts of completing college and university applications, fee waivers, data tracking, and PR and social media ideas. Additionally, through September and October, the Utah College Application Week Program Manager traveled to several districts to provide additional training and support to site teams.

Our participating school sites (listed below) agreed to set aside time and space during the school day with computer and internet access, and provided school personnel and volunteer support to assist their seniors in filling out and submitting at least one college application during the designatedUCAW weeks. The schools launched college awareness activities for all their students during the week prior including lunch-time activities, assemblies, announcements and school videos, posters and school-wide door decorating contests. Most sites brought entire English, other core or advisory classes to the library or computer lab to complete college applications. A few schools such as Taylorsville High, Wasatch High, and American Leadership Academy, were able to support the entire senior class at one time through use of individual laptops or iPads. Provo High School asked students to indicate where they wanted to apply and called them to the computer labs in those groups during non-core classes, garnering additional support from their teachers, and representatives from the college or university assisted students in completing their applications. Participating high school seniors, volunteers and site teams were surveyed about their experience in an effort to make improvements for the continued implementation and expansion in 2015. A Scantron bubble-sheet survey was distributed to each student participant and we are still collecting and processing that data, which includes the number of first generation college students, and number of applications completed and submitted, as is self-reported by students.

**2014 School Sites**

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Canyons School District</b><br>Alta High<br>Brighton High<br>Corner Canyon High<br>Hillcrest High<br>Jordan High | <b>Jordan School District</b><br>Copper Hills High<br>West Jordan High                                     | <b>San Juan School District</b><br>Monticello High<br>Monument Valley High<br>Navajo Mountain High<br>San Juan High<br>Whitehorse High |
| <b>Charter School</b><br>American Leadership Academy  | <b>Nebo School District</b><br>Maple Mountain High<br>Payson High<br>Salem Hills High<br>Spanish Fork High | <b>Tooele School District</b><br>Dugway High<br>Grantsville High<br>Stansbury High<br>Tooele High                                      |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | Springville High  | Wendover High                                       |
| <b>Davis School District</b><br>Layton High<br>Northridge High   | <b>Ogden School District</b><br>Ben Lomond High<br>George Washington High<br>Ogden High | <b>Wasatch School District</b><br>Wasatch High      |
| <b>Iron School District</b><br>Canyon View High<br>Parowan High<br>Cedar City High   | <b>Provo School District</b><br>Independence High<br>Provo High<br>Timpview High        | <b>Washington School District</b><br>Pine View High |
| <b>Granite School District</b><br>Connection High<br>Cottonwood High<br>Cyprus High<br>Granger High<br>Hunter High<br>Kearns High<br>Olympus High<br>Skyline High<br>Taylorsville High | <b>Salt Lake School District</b><br>East High<br>West High<br>Highland High             | <b>Weber School District</b><br>Roy High            |

All in all we had a successful second year of Utah College Application Week and learned a great deal. The sites with the best results had strong school administration (principal, vice principal) support and innovative and encouraging district leadership. Sites with these individuals in place had a higher percentage of their senior class participate, more applications submitted, smoother programming, and were more likely to include Utah College Application Week as an extension of college readiness efforts already in place in the school. These schools and districts were also more likely to encourage the district foundation to set aside funds to help pay the application fee for underserved students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Having high school administration, school district and school board support and participation during Utah College Application Week resulted in more students understanding the importance of submitting a college application, and more parents understanding the required information needed for their student to complete an application (for example, knowing a social security number, driver's license information, city/state of birth, application fee payment, etc.). This year, Canyons School District partnered with USHE to bring the UCAW program to all five of their high schools; with strong district support and administration buy in Utah College Application Week enjoyed wonderful success. The school board highlighted UCAW in two of their meetings, including hearing from students who expressed why this program was important to them; additionally the Canyons District School Board set aside \$25,000 dollars to assist underserved and low-income students with college application fees. The district was involved in a media and social media campaign and involved high schools, communities, and businesses in their UCAW programming.

There was great media coverage of Utah College Application Week events and programming throughout November, including coverage of kick off events with Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox, Commissioner David L. Buhler, President Matthew Holland of Utah Valley University, President Charles Wight of Weber State University, and President Denece Huftalin of Salt Lake Community College. Articles and video coverage appeared on KSL, KUTV, in the Deseret News, the Salt Lake Tribune, the Standard Examiner, and various university and local newspapers. Staff from the Office of the Commissioner conducted site

visits at 40 of the 49 participating high schools, which ranged from Roy High School to Wendover High School, Cedar City High School to Pine View High School in St. George and Monument Valley High School in the four-corners region.

Though the institutions were open last year to feedback surrounding the hurdles inherent in the their college application, in working with a critical mass of students from all backgrounds this year it was evident that residency, the required social security number and/or driver's license numbers, and difficulty in changing a student's status from concurrent enrollment to incoming freshman are areas of the application that need improvement. Additionally, student's difficulty or inability to pay an application fee and no simple or consistent process for submitting a fee waiver for students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch is a huge barrier for most underserved students. Education Direction, an independent education consulting firm, also surveyed students on the application process. They collected survey data from 1,700 seniors on their experience with the USHE applications. These findings will be shared over the coming months with key USHE and K-12 stakeholders as part of the State System Transformation grant from the Gates Foundation. At present we are still compiling data. We are also working with admissions directors to determine any potential increase in submitted applications from partner schools both during the specific Utah College Application Week program, as well as before and after the campaign. Further data analysis will be required to measure year-over-year increase in submitted applications in addition to examining data from the National Clearinghouse to determine enrollment numbers of each high school's senior cohort. Early analysis suggests:

- In our partner schools **52,462** students in grades 9-12 participated in Utah College Application Week awareness activities.
- Out of 18,000 possible senior students in our partner schools, **10,996 seniors participated in application programming support.**
- The percentage of senior class who from partner schools who participated ranged from 17% to 100%,(depending on school model and administration commitment) with the average being **68% seniors participation per high school.**

#### Next Steps

- Finalize data reporting, share outcomes and lessons learned with stakeholders.
- Create MOU for 2015 program to strengthen and build upon programs already in place in Utah high schools and incorporate FAFSA completion programming into Utah College Application Week.
- Recruit additional sites and districts for 2015 participation; we hope to increase to 100 participating sites.
- Work with USHE institutions to improve their on-line application and enrollment process from data collected through feasibility study on system wide college application portal.
- Launch our 2015 program in May and September with site team training for our Utah College Application Week: November 9-13 for awareness and November 16-20 for application submission.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only, no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation strategic objective.

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David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/MMK  
Attachments

# The Salt Lake Tribune

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## Utah high schools, higher education encourage students to apply to college

BY BENJAMIN WOOD

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 12, 2014 10:20PM

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 12, 2014 10:41PM

Austin Taylor completed two college applications Wednesday — one to Southern Utah University and another to Snow College.

The Kearns High School senior hopes to study medicine and eventually work in a hospital emergency room. And he wants to start his education at a junior college before transferring to a Tier 1 school like the University of Utah.

He's ready to graduate from high school and move on.

But despite all that thinking about college, Taylor acknowledged he might not have finished his applications so early without a little gentle pressure: He filled out the forms in the Kearns High School library surrounded by his classmates and watched over by a fleet of school counselors, volunteers and Utah Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox.

"I don't think I would've done it at home," he said. "I probably would have slacked off."

The event was part of Utah College Application Week, an initiative sponsored by the Utah System of Higher Education to promote college enrollment and provide students with help while navigating the application process. Organizers hope the push results in 20,000 applications to 50 participating schools and a wave of incoming freshmen in the fall.

"It can be a little intimidating and a little bit confusing," said David Buhler, Utah's commissioner of higher education. "A lot of students have a desire to go to college but they don't know how to go about it."



Al Hartmann | The Salt Lake Tribune  
Utah Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox speaks to Kearns High School seniors Wednesday Nov. 12 on the importance of continuing their education as they apply online at the Kearns High School Library for college during Utah College Application Week.

College Application Week is in its second year, Buhler said, and officials hope it continues to grow.

At Kearns, which was among the 15 original schools that participated last year, banners and decorations lined the hallways, promoting Utah's public and private colleges. Students who completed applications received free T-shirts and other prizes.

Last year, 82 percent of Kearns' senior class completed at least one application, school counselor Danie Natter said. The school is aiming for 85 percent of seniors this year.

"College Application Week is one of my favorite things we do," Natter said. "It gives (students) an avenue where they have help, where they have someone who can cheer for them and be excited."

In Utah, 27.6 percent of adults have some college, but no degree, according to U.S. Census Bureau data, leaving the state with one of the highest non-completion rates in the country.

Buhler said the state's college and university presidents are developing strategies to improve degree completion, but initiatives like College Application Week are designed to target the "beginning of the pipeline" and provide outreach to underserved populations and first-generation college students.

"We know that we need to have more start going to college to have more finish college," he said.

The lieutenant governor spent the morning helping students with their applications and chatting with them about their intended alma maters.

Too often, Cox said, educators talk about the need to continue education beyond high school, but fail to follow through on the steps required to enroll in higher education.

"Life happens and deadlines are missed," he said.

Cox said the state's economy depends on removing the barriers between grade school and college and that one of the priorities of Gov. Gary Herbert is to increase the number of school counselors who can help guide students through the transition to postsecondary education.

"We need great, trained counselors to help cut through the clutter," he said.

Kearns High School student Robert Schley said he appreciated having help nearby while he applied to Salt Lake Community College.

"I did have a lot of questions," he said. "This is my first time doing it, so I was glad I had help."

Salt Lake Tribune reporter Annie Knox contributed to this report.

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# Deseret News

## College Application Week coming to Canyons School District

Published: Monday, Nov. 3 2014 12:39 p.m. MST

SANDY — College Application Week for Canyons School District is Nov. 17-21. All district high school seniors will complete a college application during the regular school day with the help of counselors, faculty, support professionals and parent volunteers.

Utah College Application Week, sponsored by the Utah System of Higher Education's StepUp to Higher Education campaign, complements the Canyons Board of Education's mission to ensure [all students are ready for college and careers](#) when they graduate high school. Students in all five Canyons high schools — Alta, Brighton, Corner Canyon, Hillcrest and Jordan — are participating in the weeklong event.

"It sets everyone on an equal playing field ... and lets them take their education to the next level," Jordan High student body officer Bronson Battaglia said of College Application Week. "That's what college is all about."

College Application Week is part of the [American College Application Campaign](#), a national initiative that aims to remove barriers to higher education and increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a post-secondary education.

Canyons District middle schools also are participating in Utah College Application Week activities.

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## SLCC president brings USHE's College Application Week to Taylorsville

As part of Utah System of Higher Education's College Application Week, Salt Lake Community College President Deneece Huftalin visited Taylorsville High School to talk about the value of a higher education.

Taylorsville, Utah (PRWEB) November 13, 2014

The message Salt Lake Community College President Deneece Huftalin had Thursday for Taylorsville High School seniors wasn't so much about choosing SLCC as it was to understand the value of a college education.

"I implore you, I don't care where you go to college – I want you to go to college," said Dr. Huftalin. "I want you to study what you're passionate about. I want you to love what you're learning."

Dr. Huftalin, along with Taylorsville Mayor Larry Johnson, spoke at Taylorsville High as part of Utah System of Higher Education's Utah College Application Week. Several elected officials, college and university presidents and school leaders have been speaking at events throughout the state this week, reaching more than 20,000 seniors in 15 districts. The weeklong event has focused on first-generation and low-income students who might be less likely to apply to or enroll in college.

"Taylorsville High School has historically been a wonderful school for us in terms of a pipeline to Salt Lake Community College, and they do wonderful things once they come to us," Huftalin said. She reminded students of SLCC's many campuses throughout the Salt Lake Valley. "And I would encourage you to investigate what you might be able to take closer to home."

Dr. Huftalin said SLCC students often say they like the smaller class sizes at a school that is actually large – about 30,000 students per semester – and where faculty know their names. "We're huge, but we feel small," she said. "And we have a huge range of programs."

Johnson and Huftalin urged students to visit the various classrooms throughout the high school where college and university representatives were set up for the morning to answer questions and give hands-on help with the application process.

"Your future is in front of you – it's only nine months away," Huftalin said. "I know you're thinking about the next test, which is tomorrow. I get that you're focused on this point and time. But in nine months you're going to be somewhere else, and you need to figure out today where that's going to be."

Salt Lake Community College is an accredited, student-focused, urban college meeting the diverse needs of the Salt Lake community. Home to more than 60,000 students each year, the College is Utah's leading provider of workforce development programs. SLCC is also the largest supplier of transfer students to Utah's four-year institutions and a perennial Top 10 college nationally for total associate degrees awarded. The College is the sole provider of applied technology courses in the Salt Lake area, with multiple locations, an eCampus, and nearly 1,000 continuing education sites located throughout the Salt Lake Valley. Personal attention from an excellent faculty is paramount at the College, which maintains an average class size of 20.

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