

September 7, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: StepUp to Higher Education Initiative

Background

The StepUp to Higher Education Initiative was created in 2011 when the Office of the Commissioner received a College Access Challenge Grant. The initiative's main purpose was to create a social awareness campaign to encourage Utah's K-12 students to dream big about their future and include college in that dream.

Since then, StepUp to Higher Education has become the umbrella brand for all Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) outreach and access programming. Before, many programs operating out of the Office of the Commissioner and the Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA) had separate logos, websites, and social media streams. This created confusion among Utah students and parents, as they were unaware these programs all operated under the same roof. This coordination of outreach materials was implemented in the spring of 2015. The programs incorporated in the new single outreach brand are:

- Regents' Scholarship/New Century Scholarship
- Utah Scholars Initiative
- Concurrent Enrollment
- Utah College Application Week
- FAFSA Completion Open House events (from UHEAA)
- College Access Network of Utah
- StepUp READY grants
- USHE Conference for School Counselors and Administrators

This year the StepUP campaign has also produced materials specifically aimed at parents, including a Parent Brochure and television commercials directing them to the StepUPUtah.org website. An entire section of the website (StepUPUtah.com) is devoted to helping parents help their children prepare for college.

To house all of this information, the website StepUPUtah.com was overhauled last summer to make it more accessible and student-friendly. It is intended as a "one-stop shop" for the best information and resources for Utah students, parents and school counselors about preparing and paying for college. The campaign also includes a blog, social media, and five different newsletters aimed at specific audiences. The campaign also produces printed materials, including an annual College Guide (including copies in Spanish), a Parent Brochure (including copies in Spanish), and videos and television ads aimed at parents.

Issue

By having a single look and feel to all USHE outreach materials, market penetration is greater. More students and parents are recognizing USHE materials and messaging as a dependable and informative source of college preparation information. StepUpUtah.com receives on average, between 45,000 and 55,000 pageviews per month, about half of which come from new visitors to the site. The average session duration of these visits is 1 minute 43 seconds, indicating that visitors are reading and engaging with the content. The social media campaigns have 11,000 followers. Five separate monthly newsletters reach 135,000 subscribers.

This year's College Guide will be given to nearly every high school senior in the state through the Utah Council's Post High School Tour, a consortium of USHE and private school admissions officers and recruiters which visits schools across the state between September and November. All counselors who attend USHE's Conference for School Administrators and Counselors will also receive a copy. Additionally, this publication is available to the junior high and middle schools that participate in the Utah Scholars Initiative programs. It will also be used in community outreach events coordinated by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. Last year 80,000 guides were distributed to Utah students and families directly through their schools or through various outreach and access programs. A PDF copy of the College Guide is available at College guide link: <https://stepuputah.com/files/CollegeGuide2016.pdf> . Parent videos are available on the StepUp Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/StepUpUtah> .

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no formal action by the Board is required.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JH/MH