

May 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Utah College Application Week

Background

Since 2013, the Commissioner's Office has been helping high schools across the state to organize Utah College Application Week during the month of November. The goal of Utah College Application Week (UCAW) is to provide every high school senior at 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 is 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 to college or university.

Issue

Sometimes, the process of sitting down to fill out a college application can be one of the most daunting steps toward enrolling in higher education, particularly for students who do not have parents familiar with the application process. To address the hesitation many students have with starting the application process, high schools that participate in Utah College Application Week agree to provide space in a computer lab and dedicate time during the school day for high school seniors to fill out and submit at least one college application. School personnel and volunteers stand by to assist students with questions. As part of Utah College Application Week participation, schools also agree to host college awareness activities for all their students, not just the seniors, including lunch-time activities, assemblies, announcements and school videos, posters and school-wide door decorating contests. They must also organize a Paying for College/FAFSA night and some kind of springtime celebration where seniors announce which college they have decided to attend. Participating schools also have students complete a survey about their college-going plans and their experiences with UCAW on behalf of the Commissioner's Office.

Outcome

The 2016 efforts behind Utah College Application Week were very successful; 117 schools participated, allowing 19,519 students to complete 25,365 college applications during the school day. Of those students, 90% said that Utah College Application Week helped them feel more comfortable with the college application process. Almost a third of the students identified as "first generation," which was defined here as meaning neither of their parents had attended college. The attached annual report includes more specific data.

There were several regional media and public kick off events associated with Utah College Application Week 2016. Weber State University President, Chuck Wight, shared his college experience with Ogden High School students. Salt Lake County Mayor, Ben McAdams, spoke to high school seniors at Cyprus High School. Utah Lt. Governor, Spencer Cox, and Commissioner, David Buhler, spoke to high school seniors at Kearns High School. Snow College President, Gary Carlston, and UVU's Vice-President, Kyle Reyes, spoke at Payson High School. Dixie State University President, Biff Williams, spoke at Desert Hills, Dixie, and Snow Canyon High Schools during their kick off assemblies and events. In addition, President Williams, USHE Assistant Commissioner, Julie Hartley, and USHE's Access Manager, Maria Martinez, also appeared on statewide television to tout Utah College Application Week, including a spot on Univision to reach out to Hispanic Students.

In support of these efforts, Governor, Gary Herbert, declared November 2017 "Utah College Application Month". November is also National College Application Month.

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.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JHM
Attachment



BACKGROUND:

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC) is a 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 the initiative is to help high school seniors navigate the college admission process and ensure each participating student submits a viable application during the school day in November with support from counselors, teachers, access groups, college and university representatives, or other volunteers. Additional activities and programming surround FAFSA Completion and celebrating a student's decision to attend college at College Signing/College Decision Day in May.

In addition to the goal of providing every high school senior in partner schools the opportunity to complete at least one application, Utah College Application Week (UCAW) has a particular focus on students who will be the first in their families to attend, low-income students, or students who may not have otherwise considered applying to college. This program is low cost for schools although success is reliant on school buy-in, and the ability for the site coordinator to dedicate the hours required for planning and implementation.

2013 PILOT:

Utah piloted college application week with eight high schools in three districts. Over 2,300 students participated submitting over 1,500 college applications. Students reported UCAW increased their interest in going to college by 87%; 55% identified as first-generation college students.

2014 + 2015 EXPANSION:

Utah College Application Week saw enormous growth in both 2014 & 2015 increasing from eight to 49 schools, to 85 school and community sites throughout the state in 2015. With the 2014 campaign UCAW expanded to two weeks with 12,822 college applications submitted while the 2015 campaign saw 21,476 applications submitted.

2016 EXPANSION:

Utah College Application Week continued to grow in 2016 and with 117 partner schools and community sites on board, the campaign expanded to the entire month of November allowing schools to choose their week to host their events. See page 2 for a detailed overview of the 2016 campaign.

117 school & community sites, in **32** school districts

19,519 students participated; submitting **25,365** applications

84% or more said that participating in UCAW:

- Increased their comfort level with the college application process (**90%**)
- Increased their likeliness to ask for help with college applications (**84%**)
- Increased their interest in going to college after high school graduation (**86%**)

82% know the importance of applying for federal financial aid

79% are planning to complete and submit the FAFSA

28% identified as first-generation college students

(specified as neither parent/guardian attending college)

WHERE DID STUDENTS APPLY?

98.8% applied to a Utah institution

87% of in-state applications
were submitted to a USHE institution

13%
private
or other

73% of in-state applications
were submitted to a 4-year institution

27%
2-year institution

For additional information, or to participate, contact:
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