

September 12, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Statewide College Advisors

The Utah Board of Regents is introducing a statewide program that will put a permanent, full-time college access advisor in every high school in Utah. This keystone initiative of the Board is the culmination of the efforts of the Working Groups and reflects the Board's prioritization of access and affordability issues over the past year.

Just 45 percent of Utah high school seniors make it to college. Many don't think it's possible for them, or they have no idea where to even start. The on-the-ground, near-peer college access advisor will help students register for and complete college entrance exams, submit college applications, apply for scholarships and financial aid, and connect them to first year experience programs to ensure a smooth transition from high school to college.

This statewide college access advising program would be an expansion of the Utah College Advising Corps, which has been operated by the University of Utah since 2007. The program was initially established under a joint grant from the Board of Regents and the University of Utah from the Jack Kent Cook Foundation, with the original intent to take this program statewide. Under the current program, 12 schools in Utah have a full-time advisor (11 along the Wasatch Front and 1 in St. George, as a partnership between the University of Utah and Dixie State University).

The Utah College Advising Corps model is proven to improve college enrollment and college graduation rates:

- Only 45% of Utah high school seniors make it to college immediately after high school. Students in the 12 schools with college access advisors enrolled at a rate of 58%.
- For every meeting with a college access advisor, students are 13% more likely to actually enroll in college.
- Students who met three to five times with a college access advisor are 42% more likely to enroll in college. After six meetings, they are 145% more likely to enroll in college.
- For every meeting with a college access advisor, students are 5% more likely to graduate from college.
- First-generation college students, specifically, are 8% more likely to graduate from college.

This proposal is to scale the program statewide, under the direction of the State Board of Regents, into every high school in Utah by the school year 2021-2022. As it is implemented across the state, the program will be regionally integrated into local USHE institutions to tie in with their programming and access efforts.

The current projected cost for state tax funds to implement this program is \$5,995,000, which will be refined as the Board pursues additional funding options and internal reprioritizations. The current funding request will include a one-time funding reduction the first year as the program prepares to scale statewide.

Commissioner's Recommendation

1. The Commissioner recommends the Board review and adopt the statewide college access advising program as its keystone initiative in support of the Board's strategic priorities.
2. The Commissioner recommends the Board require regular reporting on the implementation and scaling of the statewide college access advising program, including metrics on cost and student outcomes related to postsecondary enrollment and completion.
3. The Commissioner recommends the Board prioritize the statewide college access advising program as a top funding request in the Board of Regents' statutorily-obligated unified budget priorities for the Utah System of Higher Education.
4. The Commissioner recommends the Board instruct the Commissioner's Office to explore potential alternative funding opportunities to offset the total cost of this initiative, including internal reallocations and non-state funding sources in preparation for the 2019 Legislative Session.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/SJ
Attachment

Too many Utah high school students are not going on to college. Though college is accessible to everyone in Utah—the majority of the public colleges and universities in the state are open-access, meaning anyone can attend—many high school students don't think college is possible for them. And even if they do, many have no idea where to even start. These problems are often especially true for those with significant barriers to college entry, such as students who are low-income and first-generation.

A recent survey commissioned by the Utah Board of Regents found 90% of Utah parents expect their children to attend college, yet only about two-thirds of all Utah's high school graduates enroll in college within five years. The cost of attending college is the top higher education issue for Utah parents, but only about half feel confident in finding information on scholarships, grants and financial aid.

To better support Utah high school students on their path to college, and to change the outcome for a generation of Utahns, the Utah Board of Regents is introducing a statewide program that will put a permanent, full-time college access advisor in every high school in Utah.

The program will help high school students:

- Register for and complete college entrance exams
- Submit college applications
- Apply for scholarships, grants and financial aid
- Connect to first-year experience programs for a seamless transition into higher education

Advisors will be available to every high school student, but will have an intentional focus on supporting low-income and first-generation students.

Advisors are recent college graduates. This “near-peer” model allows the advisors to speak from experience about navigating college systems, sharing college experiences, and supporting students who are experiencing similar barriers to entry.

The program expands the Utah College Advising Corps, a program of the University of Utah that, for over 10 years, has successfully helped students navigate the process of getting into college. This program has been in 12 Utah high schools since 2007, and has demonstrated effectiveness in improving college enrollment and college graduation rates.

College enrollment

Meeting with a college access advisor increases likelihood of enrollment

- One advisor meeting (13%)

- Three to five advisory meetings (42%)
- Six advisory meetings (145%)

College graduation

For every meeting with a college access advisor, the likelihood of college graduation increases:

- Five percent
- Eight percent for a first-generation student

Timeline

The statewide college advisor program will be implemented over a period of two years. By the 2020-2021 school year, an advisor will be available in half of Utah high schools. By the school year 2021-2022, advisors will be permanently in all Utah high schools.

Investment

The program is estimated to cost \$7 million. The projected state investment is \$5,995,000 with the remainder of the funding coming from existing resources.

Long-term Benefits

Utah needs more high school graduates to earn a college credential to ensure the state has the educated workforce necessary to continue to strengthen Utah's economic growth, meet workforce needs, and provide an opportunity for every Utahn to better their circumstance.

As the Board of Regents enters into its 50th year, it is making a permanent mark on Utah's future landscape with the program. By making this landmark investment in getting more students to attend—and graduate from—college, especially those who likely would not have otherwise attended, this first-in-the-nation, statewide college access advisor program will:

- Increase college enrollment
- Increase college graduation
- Change the course of intergenerational poverty