



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TAB C

December 18, 2020

Proposed Revisions to Utah System of Higher Education Scholarships

In 2019, the former USHE Board of Regents recommended eliminating the New Century and Regents' Scholarship programs after applicants from the high school graduating class of 2021. This memo summarizes the proposed revisions to eliminate and revise state aid programs managed by the Utah Board of Higher Education.

These changes are designed to provide meaningful levers to the Board in achieving the strategic priorities of Access and Affordability, with a focus on equity. Flexibility within the existing Utah Promise Scholarship and the new scholarship outlined below will enable the Board to maximize the impact of state aid funds toward those goals in the coming years.

If adopted by the Board, these proposed revisions require conforming adjustments to state statute determinant on successful legislative support in the upcoming 2021 Utah Legislative Session. The Commissioner's office has verbal commitments from Senator Derrin Owens and Representative Melissa Ballard to sponsor priority legislation to reflect the statutory adjustments needed to implement these changes by March 2021. In September 2020, the Board's Student Affairs Committee directed staff to develop plans that reflect those recommendations.

Regents' Scholarship

Established in 2008, the program was originally designed to improve college readiness by requiring high academic performance in high school, including a prescribed high school curriculum. Based on the adopted recommendations of the then-Board of Regents, the high school graduating class of 2021 will be the last applicant cohort under this program. Assuming legislative approval, this program will be replaced by the proposed new scholarship outlined below. Current eligible recipients will continue receiving awards under the original terms they were awarded. The Regents' Scholarship will fully sunset as soon as all eligible recipients complete their award period or when the five-year eligibility period expires in 2026, at the latest.

New Century Scholarship

Established in 1999, the New Century Scholarship was intended to encourage Utah high school students to accelerate their education by earning an associate degree in high school or by completing a specific math and science curriculum. On average, students who received the New Century Scholarship graduated only one semester earlier than a traditional USHE college student, despite having an associate degree. With only 300-400 recipients annually, the program isn't scaled and doesn't markedly accelerate a student's college persistence. Based on the adopted recommendations of the then-Board of Regents, the high school graduating class of 2021 will be the last applicant cohort under this program, and funding would be repurposed toward the Utah Promise Scholarship as award obligations diminish over subsequent years.

New Scholarship

For the 2021-22 academic year and beyond, this new scholarship focuses on incentivizing completion of advanced coursework proven to most likely lead to college success, an approach based on USHE evidence and peer-reviewed literature. An advanced course is defined as courses offered via:

- Concurrent Enrollment
- Advanced Placement
- International Baccalaureate

The Commissioner's office, in partnership with the Utah State Board of Education maintains a list of all current advanced courses in mathematics, language arts, and science, access to these courses is already established. For example, CE courses are available in almost every district high school and 44 (85%) secondary-level charter schools. Under the direction of the Utah Board of Higher Education, USHE institutions would be required to prioritize availability of CE courses to students to meet the requirements of this new scholarship. The proposed eligibility requirements for an award under this program are:

- Graduate from a Utah high school
- 3.3 minimum cumulative high school GPA
- Complete one advanced mathematics course (CE, AP, or IB)
- Complete one advanced language arts course (CE, AP, or IB)
- Complete one advanced science credit (CE, AP, IB)
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

A state aid program focused on advanced course completion in high school would be a significant factor in increasing CE participation of students from underrepresented groups, which is proven to impact a student's likelihood to continue to college. For example, [USHE has found that low-income high school students who take one CE course are almost twice as likely to attend college than low-income students who do not take CE.](#)

Award amounts will be determined on an annual basis depending on the number of eligible applicants, available appropriated funds, and carry-over balances. The Board may also direct a portion of the

available funds for this new scholarship to the Utah Promise Scholarship. Award eligibility may be determined by additional criteria due to funding limitations (e.g. first come, first served; pre-allocation to participating institutions).

As there is a dedicated technical education scholarship now in place, this new scholarship would be available for use at all of the institutions currently allowed under the Regents' Scholarship, with the exception of technical colleges.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends that the Utah Board of Higher Education direct staff to pursue necessary statutory revisions that enable implementation of these plans by March 2021, with regular status updates to the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee. Additionally, USHE institutions that offer Concurrent Enrollment courses shall prioritize Concurrent Enrollment courses listed in the attachment above all other approved Concurrent Enrollment courses to ensure adequate course availability for the 2021-22 academic year. Commissioner's staff shall propose revisions to Utah Board of Higher Education policy that reflect this priority requirement.