



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TAB A

April 15, 2022

Simplified Admissions Taskforce Proposal

Justification

Recent data gathered [by Envision Utah's high school student survey](#), [Cicero Group's non-traditional students study](#), the student-led Campus Safety and Equity Advisory Council, and others have identified the need to simplify admissions across the system to remove barriers to access for students. Therefore, a Simplified Admissions Taskforce is proposed consisting of USHE institutional admissions experts and Commissioner's office staff to study, discuss, and recommend solutions to simplify the admissions process for incoming students.

Supporting Data

Envision Utah: Surveyed more than 7,600 Utah high school students about their educational experiences and plans after high school.

- The process of applying to college and financial aid is a significant barrier to postsecondary education.
 - Less than half of students feel comfortable navigating the application process.
 - Students think simplifying the application and financial aid processes would have a bigger impact on postsecondary access than making college free.

Cicero Group: Surveyed 830 Utahns over 25 years of age with various educational levels and needs.

- The #1 top “pain-point” for non-traditional students was identified as “navigating the application and financial aid processes.”
- Simplifying admissions was identified as a recommended best practice for supporting non-traditional students.

Taskforce Objectives

1. Help create and implement a cohesive, sustainable, data-driven strategy for admissions in the Utah System of Higher Education
2. Support admissions best practices to remove barriers and streamline processes for first-generation students and those who education systems have historically marginalized
3. Provide input on the prioritization of taskforce goals and objectives
4. Identify and, to the extent possible, eliminate student barriers to admissions

Three Co-Chairs

- Kris Coles – Assistant Commissioner for Student Affairs
- Representative from a USHE technical college
- Representative from a USHE degree-granting institution

Taskforce Members

- An admissions representative from each of the 16 USHE institutions
- Richard Gonzalez – Assistant Commissioner for Access
- Cassidy Stortz – Director of Scholarships and State Programs

Timeframe

- March 2022 – June 2023 (15 months)
 - The taskforce will meet monthly in half-day meetings

Strategies and Topics of Focus

1. Financial aid award letters
2. Application fees and waivers
3. Keys to Success mobile application
4. Standardized test requirements
5. Spanish translation of admissions applications and websites
6. Utah College Application Week (UCAW) and Utah Higher Education Days (UHED)
7. Admissions application questions and fields
8. Student application submissions
9. Utah College Advising Corps and the application process
10. Data sharing with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE)

Benefits to Institutions

- Participants will represent their respective institutions on a state-led initiative
- The taskforce will highlight the existing best practices of individual institutions
- Individuals will represent a collective effort to provide solutions to simplifying admissions
- Any funds necessary to address systemic issues will be advocated for as a collective group and distributed equitably among institutions
- Any improvements will be the result of collaborative work and negotiation rather than a mandate from the system

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is a discussion item only; no action is required.