



August 19, 2022

Simplified Admissions Taskforce Update

Background

Beginning in April 2022, the Commissioner's office formed the systemwide Simplified Admission Taskforce to address issues facing students accessing higher education within the state. The taskforce, led by Kris Coles, Assistant Commissioner for Student Affairs, and comprised of admissions and enrollment management representatives from all 16 USHE institutions, utilized data from the [2021 Envision Utah High School Survey](#) and the [2021 Voice of the Customer Study](#) to focus on systemic ways to simplify the admissions process. The supporting data include the following:

- **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 the 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.

The taskforce originally set a schedule of 15 months to discover, discuss, and make recommendations on the following taskforce objectives:

1. Help create and implement a cohesive, sustainable, standardized, data-driven strategy for admissions in the state of Utah.
2. Support admissions best practices to serve a diverse student population – including first-time, first-year students; transfer students; graduate students; returning students; and non-degree seeking students.
3. Provide input on the prioritization of taskforce goals and objectives.

4. Identify and, to the extent possible, eliminate student obstacles to admissions.

Updates: Expedited timeline and revised taskforce objectives

After recent conversations with state- and system-level stakeholders, including the Governor's office, USHE institutional presidents, and members of the Utah Board of Higher Education regarding simplifying admissions, it has been determined that the 15-month timeline for the taskforce needs to be significantly shortened. In addition, the objectives of the taskforce should be made more explicit and aligned to the feedback from these stakeholders. Based on this feedback, updated taskforce objectives are as follows:

1. Recommendation to consider a common process for in-state, undergraduate students applying to public colleges and universities in Utah, to be implemented by Fall 2024.
 - a. A recommended dollar amount to include both the one-time creation as well as ongoing support and maintenance of the common process, in addition to one-time funds for marketing.
2. Recommendations around specific details of the common process that may or may not include:
 - a. Direct admissions in conjunction with a common process.
 - b. State scholarship application integration.
3. Recommendation regarding application fees informed by institutional survey of application fees.
4. Recommendation on the sharing of K-12 student directory information.

Next Steps

Recommendations from the Simplified Admissions Taskforce will be presented at the December 16, 2022 Student Affairs Committee meeting for discussion and consideration.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action is required.