



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

November 3, 2023

Update: Common Application for Admission

A Timeline of Simplified Admissions in Utah

In 2016, the Utah System of Higher Education first considered simplifying admissions processes for potential students. At the time, USHE commissioned a feasibility study to explore this opportunity and found that an admissions simplification initiative would reduce barriers for Utah high school students and adults and increase enrollment, specifically for underrepresented populations.¹

More recently, the Utah Board of Higher Education re-engaged in this conversation and adopted language in its strategic plan to address this initiative and consider simplifying the admissions process as a key strategy for removing barriers to access. Furthermore, [Utah statute](#) directs the Board of Higher Education to initiate and implement a common application.² Over the past year, the Commissioner's office has guided institutions, the Board, and the Utah Legislature in discussions related to a single admissions application in Utah.

To address access issues related to the admissions application process, the Commissioner's office, under the direction of the Board, formed the systemwide Simplified Admissions Taskforce in April 2022. The taskforce, made up of admissions and enrollment management professionals representing all 16 USHE institutions, convened over the following nine months to discuss concepts related to simplifying admissions, including the possibility of a common admissions application systemwide. [Four concepts](#) formulated by the taskforce were presented to the Board in its January 2023 meeting. One of those concepts was to engage with a strategic enrollment management consultant to determine the feasibility, cost, and necessary considerations of implementing a common application.

Common Application Consultation

In July 2023, USHE contracted with the Huron Consulting Group to explore creating a unified admissions application spanning the unique and complex admissions environments of the 16 USHE institutions. This work included identifying considerations to increase the percentage of K-12 students applying and enrolling for USHE institutions, reduce access barriers of complexity, cost, and time for Utah communities, and streamline the transition of students from K-12 into higher education in Utah.

¹ 2016 common application feasibility study conducted by Education Direction

² Utah Code 53B-1-402

The Huron team engaged in a 12-week data collection process, including stakeholder focus groups with students, families, and counselors; interviews of USHE institutions and internal personnel; and comparisons of peer state systems with similar admissions initiatives.

Their team's final recommendations to USHE and the Board include:

1. Deploy a unified admissions application to remove barriers and increase applications for all 16 USHE institutions.
2. Eliminate admissions application fees for students.
3. Develop partnerships across USHE and K-12 to enhance the long-term value of a unified admissions application.

Huron anticipates that implementation of a unified admissions application will take 18-24 months and require one-time and ongoing funding. Despite the risks, costs, and complexity of running a statewide unified admissions application, Huron concludes this initiative will remove barriers to applying to college and increase access to Utah's postsecondary institutions.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends approval from the Board to seek an appropriation request during the 2024 legislative session for the purposes of contracting with a vendor to build, implement, and maintain a common admissions application. This request is for \$2,215,000 ongoing and \$4,375,000 one-time funding.