



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

November 3, 2023

Utah College Advising Corps: Statewide Expansion-Pilot Update Report

The [Utah College Advising Corps](#) was established by the University of Utah in 2007. This college access program was developed to increase the number of Utah students who enroll in postsecondary education (with a focus on students from low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented backgrounds). In late 2019, the Utah Board of Higher Education and the University of Utah entered a partnership to pilot an expansion of the UCAC program across high schools in Utah. This pilot partnership expires on November 30, 2023. Additional funding support is needed to continue the UCAC program.

Program Funding and Costs

The UCAC program costs approximately \$3.7 million annually. The three-year UCAC expansion pilot was funded with \$2.5 million in one-time appropriations, \$6 million from UHEAA funds, and \$360,000 from UHEAA funds (supplemental). The University of Utah contributes \$600,000 annually. The UCAC program for FY24 (academic year 2023-24) is funded entirely, with approximately \$1.2M remaining unspent.

What is UCAC?

The UCAC program is a college-going bridge program that helps students craft college plans for technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. UCAC advisers help students determine possible future careers, guide them through institutional admissions and financial aid applications, and connect them to their receiving institution. The UCAC program is part of the [National College Advising Corps](#). College advisers are not recruiters for one institution; they promote higher education and the best college fit for students holistically and guide students to finding funding sources through filing the FAFSA and finding scholarships. UCAC utilizes two models to reach students. The *one-to-one model* places one college adviser in one high school. The *hybrid model* places one college adviser to oversee a cluster of high schools. Each model allows for virtual opportunities for students to connect with advisers.

Serving Utah in a Phased Approach

The Utah State Board of Education directory lists 251 public schools in Utah with a senior (12th-grade) class.¹ There are 202 public high schools and public K-12 schools, and 49 public charter schools with a

¹ USBE Directory: <https://www.schools.utah.gov/schoolsdirectory>

senior class.² USBE has 42 school districts in Utah. Participating high schools were determined by considering location, school size, overall high school college-going rate, percent of FAFSA completion, free/reduced lunch, percent of non-white populations, and the desire from the school to participate.

The following table details the progress and structure of the program since the partnership in 2020.

<p>Start: 2020-21</p> <p>1 regional coordinator overseeing: 13 advisers serving: 13 high schools in 5 school districts</p>	<p>Phase I: 2021-22 (complete)</p> <p>6 regional coordinators overseeing: 48 advisers serving: 51 high schools (6 rural) in 21 school districts</p>
<p>Phase II: 2022-23 (complete)</p> <p>5 regional coordinators overseeing: 52 advisers serving: 67 high schools (19 rural) in 27 school districts</p>	<p>Phase III: 2023-24 (in progress)</p> <p>5 regional coordinators overseeing: 60 advisers serving: 74 high schools (22 rural) in 29 school districts</p>

Phase III is currently serving 74 high schools. A complete list of currently served schools can be found at the end of this report.

Training

College advisers and regional coordinators participate in a robust training program that includes a two-week intense onboarding training and ongoing training throughout the year. Training includes paying and preparing for college; financial aid options (including a FAFSA deep dive, scholarships, and my529); how to conduct effective meetings with students and parents; and working with other access partners within the school like GEARUP, LIA, TRIO, PACE, and AVID. Advisers tour all USHE institutions and meet with recruitment leaders to understand and build a connection with each institution. Advisers regularly work with high school liaisons (or a recruitment team) from USHE institutions to gather materials and ensure they align with the narrative used by the institutions. In addition, advisers stay in touch with USHE institutions to get updates on program changes, admissions changes, and to send students for tours.

Why is UCAC needed in Utah?

The need and success of college access mentoring are well documented by scholarly research.³ For Utah specifically, the following facts support the necessity of this program:

- The American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. However, in Utah, the student-to-counselor ratio is more than double the

²USBE Charter Schools Overview: <https://www.schools.utah.gov/charterschools#:~:text=Charter%20Schools%20are%20governed%20by,operation%20of%20the%20charter%20school>

³ IHEP 2011: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED520415.pdf>

recommended ratio (516:1).⁴ Additionally, high school counselors only dedicate 45–55% of their time on Planning for College and Career Readiness-related duties.⁵

- The 2021 USHE annual report shares that:
 - 1 out of 3 high school students don't enroll in postsecondary education within 5 years of graduating high school;
 - 90% of Utah parents expect their children to attend college, but only 2/3 actually enroll;
 - 86% of students and parents believe college is more important than it was 10 years ago, but only 50% believe college is accessible for everyone in Utah; and
 - Only half of Utah parents feel confident in finding information on how to pay for college.⁶

College Access Advising Efficacy

The National College Advising Corp regularly collaborates with researchers from the Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education team to provide ongoing external evaluation of the effectiveness of access advising on the college access advising model. In a study conducted utilizing data from 2017-18, researchers measured the predictive validity of specific actions related to college attendance and found that:

- Holding a parent/family meeting increases students' probability of college attendance by about 12 percentage points;
- Conducting a one-on-one meeting with a student has about a 13-percentage point relationship with college attendance;
- Providing FAFSA assistance has an impact of about 11 percentage points;
- Taking a college entrance exam is associated with a 12 percentage point increase in college attendance; and
- Applying to one or more colleges and submitting the FAFSA increases the likelihood of college attendance by 23 percentage points.⁷

The adviser-focused and student-focused key performance indicators are all highly correlated. Increases in one KPI are strongly related to increases in the others. Because adviser actions are strongly related to key student actions. In turn, they are all significantly associated with college attendance. The National College Advising Corp continues to monitor progress towards all six indicators to reinforce the importance of each in supporting students on the path to college enrollment.

⁴ ASCA 2022 <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/b9d453e7-7c45-4ef7-bf90-16f1f3cbab94/Ratios-21-22-Alpha.pdf>

⁵ USBE 2020 <https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/058ab549-0d27-437e-be6e-4ce7c6421b7d>

⁶ 2021 USHE Annual Report p.22 https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/reports/2020-21_annual-report-final.pdf

⁷ College Advising Corps. *Predictive Validity of CAC's KPIs*. In the author's possession, 2019.

Tracking Utah Success: Current Key Performance Indicators

Given this research and best practices, KPIs were developed and adopted for Utah in partnership with The National College Advising Corp. The UCAC program has statewide goals and works closely with UCAC advisers to determine individual goals for each school. Individual school goals are dependent on senior class size. For example, in schools with a small senior class size, the adviser can meet with 100% of their senior class (often, they will engage with junior students in preparation for their senior year); however, at larger schools, the goal is to meet with as many seniors as possible; often around 70-80% of the senior class at their school. Goals are tracked in GRACE, the customer relation management system used by The National College Advising Corp.

The following figure provides more details about KPIs and the program's progress for each goal.

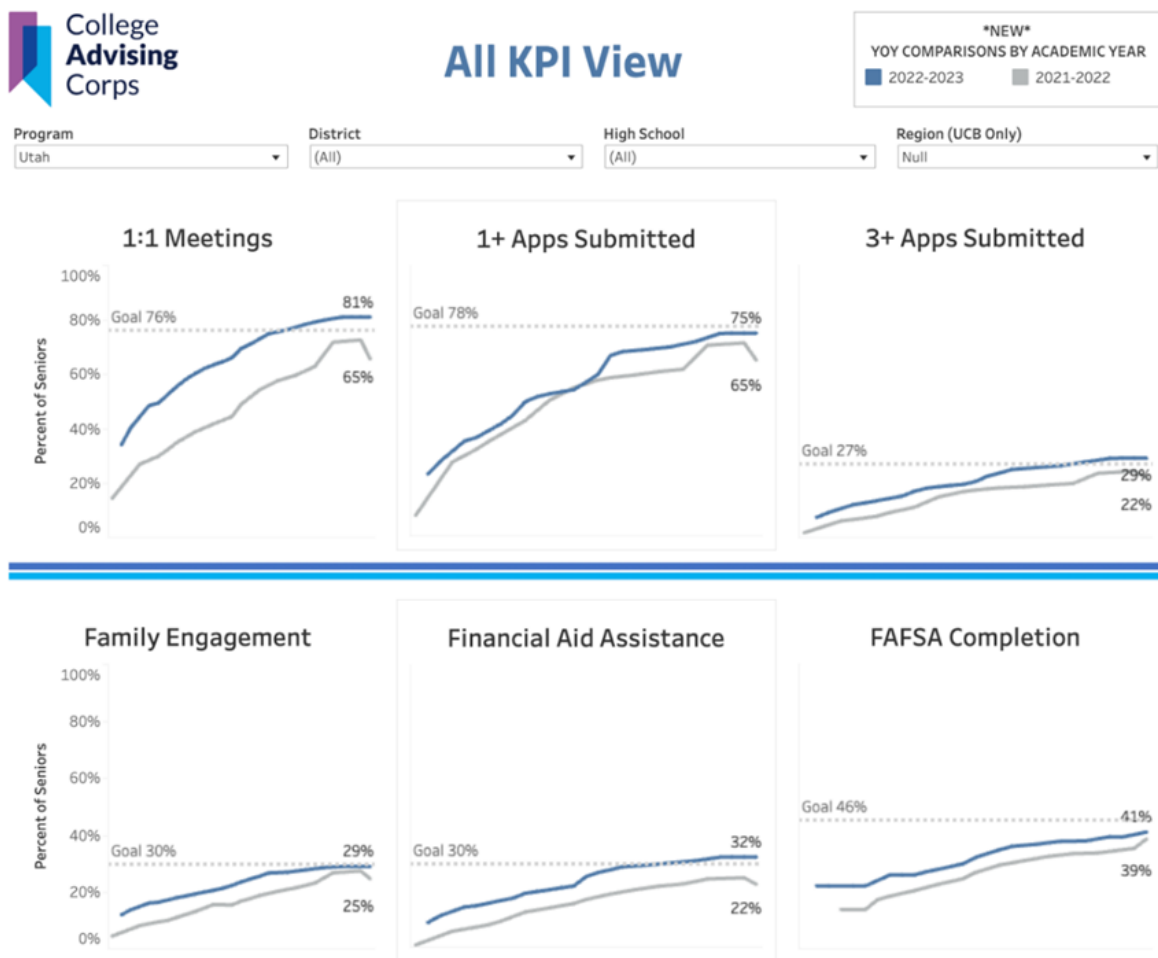


Figure 1 UCAC Key Performance Indicators

Increase One-to-One Meetings

This KPI represents self-reported one-on-one meeting(s) between the access adviser and student where meaningful conversations about college and career planning occur. In 2022-23, the 1:1 meeting goal was to meet with 76% of the participating schools' senior class. Around 23,580 seniors attended UCAC schools

during the 2022-23 school year. As noted in Figure 1, the 2022-23 goal was exceeded; college advisers met with 81% (19,100) of the seniors attending UCAC schools.

Increase College Applications Submitted (1+ and 3+)

As noted in Figure 1, 75% of seniors (17,685) at partner high schools were assisted by a college adviser in completing a college application. 29% (6,838) of seniors applied to 3+ colleges with the support of a college adviser. This goal is self-reported by advisers and does not include unfinished college applications.

Increase Meaningful Family Engagement

Meaningful family engagement is defined as a conversation with at least one family member or guardian of a student. Family engagement includes, but is not limited to, email, text messages, phone calls, and virtual or in-person meetings. The goal for the 2022-23 school year was set to engage with at least 30% of the students' families. In 2022-23, UCAC advisers engaged with at least one family member of 6,838 students (29%), an increase of 4% (943) from the previous year. This goal is also self-reported by the college adviser.

Increase Financial Aid Assistance

The financial aid assistance indicator measures the role college advisers play in supporting alternative financial aid or FAFSA completion. College advisers self-report this metric if they actively support a student and/or family in initiating, continuing, or completing the FAFSA or an alternative financial aid application. For example, assistance actions include but are not limited to helping the student/parent create a FAFSA FSA ID, guidance through the application and submission process (in-person or virtually), answering financial-related questions, and reviewing documents. College advisers engage in conversations with students by asking if they have completed their FAFSA and offering support. College access advisers assisted 32% of UCAC school seniors (7,546) with their college financial aid during the 2022-23 school year, a 10% increase from the previous school year.

Increase FAFSA Completion

Figure 1 shows that FAFSA completion at UCAC schools for 2022-23 is 41%, a 2% increase from the previous year (39%). National datasets are used to capture this information. Therefore, this measure could be inflated as it tracks all senior students, not just those an adviser helped. However, an internal FAFSA completion analysis notes that FAFSA completion rates at UCAC-participating schools are higher than Utah's average.⁸ Figure 2 compares Utah's FAFSA completion rate with UCAC schools. Utah still lags behind the nation in FAFSA completion rates, ranking 50th of 51 states (including Washington D.C.) with an end-of-school-year (June 2023) completion rate of 34.6% (18,610). Only 33.9% of seniors (17,860) completed the FAFSA during the 2022-2023 cycle; however, that's an increase of 4.2% from the previous year.

⁸ 2023 <https://studentaid.gov/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school>

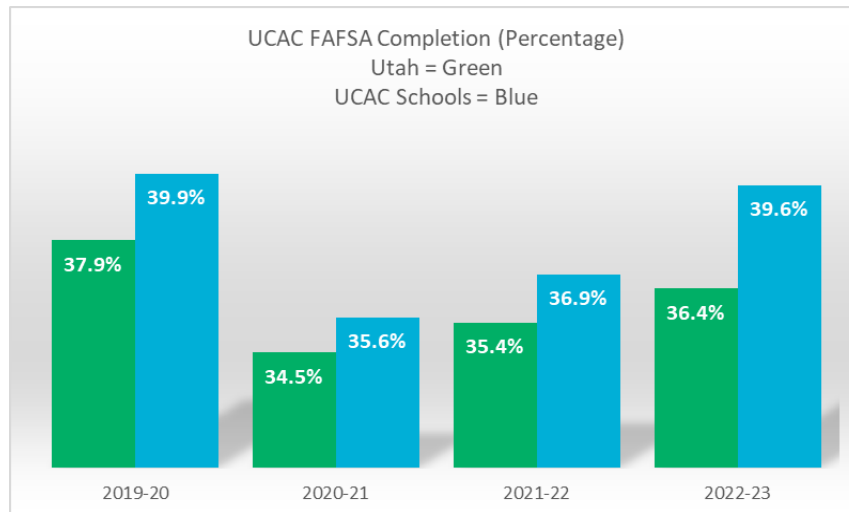


Figure 2 FAFSA Completion for Utah Students

Secondary School Feedback

The results are overwhelmingly positive when surveying school counselors, high school principals, and career center staff from high schools served by the UCAC program and its advisers. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, UCAC conducted two end-of-year exit surveys. The surveys were sent to about 120 school counselors, principals, and career center staff from UCAC-participating schools. The results show:

- 100% (78 individual participants) want the UCAC program to continue in their school;
- 86% (100 responses) want their specific college access adviser to return for the following year;
- 97% (100 responses) noted that their college access adviser was helpful to students;
- 93% (100 responses) noted that the college access adviser was helpful to the faculty and staff at the high school.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Board allocate \$1.916 million in available one-time UHEAA set-aside funding to support the continuation of UCAC operations in Fiscal Year 2025. The Commissioner further recommends the Board consider an ongoing budget request in future years provisional on systemwide adoption of the program.

Attachment

UCAC Expansion High Schools			
Start List: 2020-21	Phase I: 2021-22	Phase II: 2022-23	Phase III: 2023-24
13 High Schools:	51 High Schools:	67 High Schools:	74 High Schools:
Cottonwood	American Fork	Altamont	Altamont
Cyprus	Bear River	American Fork	American Fork
East	Ben Lomond	Bear River	Bear River
Granger	Bonneville	Beaver	Beaver
Highland	Box Elder	Ben Lomond	Ben Lomond
Hillcrest	Canyon View	Bonneville	Bonneville
Hunter	Clearfield	Box Elder	Box Elder
Kearns	Cottonwood	Bryce Valley	Bryce Valley
Pine View	Crimson Cliffs	Canyon View	Canyon View
Skyline	Cyprus	Clearfield	Career Tech
Taylorsville	Delta	Cottonwood	Clearfield
West	Desert Hills	Crimson Cliffs	Copper Hills
West Jordan	Dixie	Cyprus	Cottonwood
	East	Delta	Crimson Cliffs
	Fremont	Desert Hills	Cyprus
	Grand County	Dixie	Delta
	Granger	Duchesne	Desert Hills
	Grantsville	East	Dixie
	Green Canyon	Escalante	Duchesne
	Hillcrest	Fremont	East
	Hunter	Granger	Escalante
	Hurricane	Green Canyon	Fremont
	Juab	Gunnison Valley	Grand County
	Kanab	Highland	Granger
	Kearns	Hillcrest	Grantsville
	Lake Powell	Hunter	Green Canyon
	Layton	Hurricane	Gunnison Valley
	Logan	Juab	Highland

	Mountain Crest	Kearns	Hillcrest
	Mountain View	Layton	Hunter
	Ogden	Logan	Hurricane
	Olympus	Manti	Juab
	Orem	Milford	Kearns
	Payson	Millard	Layton
	Pine View	Mountain Crest	Logan
	Provo	Mountain View	Manti
	Ridgeline	North Sanpete	Milford
	Sky View	North Sevier	Millard
	Skyridge	Ogden	Mountain Crest
	Snow Canyon	Olympus	Mountain View
	Springville	Orem	North Sanpete
	Syracuse	Panguitch	North Sevier
	Taylorsville	Parowan	Ogden
	Timpview	Payson	Olympus
	Tooele	Pine View	Orem
	Uintah	Piute	Panguitch
	Valley (Orderville)	Provo	Parowan
	Water Canyon	Ridgeline	Payson
	West	Roy	Pine View
	West Jordan	Sky View	Piute
	Woods Cross	Skyline	Provo
		Skyridge	Ridgeline
		Snow Canyon	Roy
		South Sevier	Sky View
		Spanish Fork	Skyline
		Springville	Skyridge
		Tabiona	Snow Canyon
		Taylorsville	Spanish Fork
		Timpview	Springville
		Tooele	Syracuse
		Uintah	Tabiona
		Union	Taylorsville
		Wayne	Timpview
		West	Tintic

		West Jordan	Tooele
		Westlake	Uintah
		Woods Cross	Union
			Water Canyon
			Wayne
			West Desert
			West
			West Jordan
			Westlake
			Woods Cross