

January 15, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: Utah College Application Week Pilot

Background

The American College Application Campaign (ACAC), is national initiative of the American Council on Education (ACE), to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. The purpose of this initiative is to help high school seniors navigate the college admissions process and ensure each participating student submits at least one college admissions application during the school day during the designated week.

The ACAC initiative began in 2005, in a single GEAR UP North Carolina high school in Chatham County. In the spring of 2013, Assistant Commissioner, Melissa Miller Kincart, was approached about piloting this program in Utah with support of the College Access Network of Utah (CANU). In November, Utah joined 39 states and the District of Columbia in participating in the American College Application Campaign. The American Council of Education hopes to have all states engaged in the 2014 campaign.

Issue

In August, a team of College Access Network of Utah representatives were invited to participate in a national convening of states, hosted in Washington, D.C., to learn about effective strategies and practices for executing the College Application Week program. Based on what we learned the CANU Steering Committee decided that we would pilot this program in the fall in several high schools by partnering with dedicated GEAR UP and/or Utah College Advising Corps members to ensure we had strong staff support and buy-in in the schools. As a result, we aligned our efforts with the national dates and pilot Utah College Application Week November 11-15, 2013, in three districts and eight high schools with the average Free and Reduced Lunch need of 55%. Soon after, a Utah College Application Week (UCAW) steering committee was created with representatives from Granite, Salt Lake, and Ogden School Districts, United Way of Salt Lake, GEAR UP, Utah College Advising Corps, admissions directors and outreach staff from a number of USHE institutions and Westminster College with leadership and support provided by the Access and Outreach Department of the Office of the Commissioner.

The UCAW steering committee determined that the goal of Utah College Application Week is to provide every high school senior at our partner schools the opportunity to complete at least one college or university application. A special focus was placed on students who would be the first in their families to

attend, low-income students, or students who may not have otherwise considered applying. Over an eight week period of time the steering committee determined school sites, selected site coordinators, developed school implementation plans, identified student preparation needs, explored fee waiver possibilities with our colleges and universities, created and distributed marketing materials with the help of Love Communications, recruited volunteers, developed training resources and tracking materials and shared this information and resources through a statewide Drop Box. Additionally, ACE sent out a representative to train and support the steering committee, as well as spend two days in October training over 100 volunteers comprised of district and school personnel, access and admissions program staff, United Way staff and AmeriCorps and VISTA members.

Our pilot school sites (listed below) agreed to set aside time and space during the school day with computer and internet access, and provide school personnel and volunteer support to assist their seniors filling out AT LEAST one application. The schools also launched college awareness activities for all their students during this week, and assisted us in tracking the number of participants and college applications submitted. The "I applied...What's Next" information sheet was distributed to all seniors to make them aware of financial aid resources. It also contained information on UHEEA's FAFSA Completion support, and many schools were doing follow-up work in their advisory periods to make sure these students were aware of similar school led FAFSA support. Participating high school seniors, volunteers and site teams were surveyed about their experience in an effort to make improvements for the continued implementation in 2014.

2013 School Sites and Coordinator Information

<u>Granite District</u>	<u>Event Date(s)</u>	<u>Site Coordinator</u>
Kearns High	November 11-15	Julie Brough
Cottonwood High	November 11-15	Martha Camarillo
Taylorville High	Nov. 19, 7:30-10:30am	Mike Lehr
<u>Salt Lake District</u>	<u>Event Date(s)</u>	<u>Site Coordinator</u>
East High School	November 13-15	Sydney Mitton
West High School	November 13-15	Christine Pittam
Highland High School	November 13-15	Doreen Carey
<u>Ogden School District</u>	<u>Event Date(s)</u>	<u>Site Coordinator</u>
Ben Lomond High School	November 11-14	Melanie Clifford and Tamra Larsen
Ogden High School	November 11-14	Nikki Wardle and Jacque Mendenhall

All in all we had a successful pilot year and learned a great deal. We had a number of school best practices emerge such as development of senior packets, use of teachers and PTA as volunteers, classroom focused application sessions by institution, use of student leaders as peer mentors, use of school marquee, morning announcements, and school clubs to promote the week, meeting with all senior English classes in order to touch as many seniors as possible, and foundation donations to cover application fees. A number of challenges were identified, the most significant pertaining to USHE application's use of social security number field, driver's license information, confusion around ethnicity designations and processes for undocumented students, and lack of and varied processes for fee waivers for high need students. School buy-in varied amongst sites, and those schools with principal buy-in had the most successful programs. This will be easier in future years because the implementation timeline will not be so tight. Additionally, data tracking and analysis took over thirty hours of data entry just for our eight schools this year.

As a result the steering committee suggested the following changes be considered for 2014; identification of dates in early spring for fall implementation, have the program run for two weeks to allow the first week for student and parent awareness and the second for application submission, principal and site coordinator joint meeting, use school data systems and Scantron surveys to ease evaluation, and encourage the USHE institutions to use the same online application or at the very least standardize the order and questions.

Staff from the Office of the Commissioner conducted site visits at each of the participating schools throughout the week, and at each location were able to assist a few students in submitting their applications. Joe Watts, Senior Fellow at ACE, visited programs at Kearns and Ogden High schools on Tuesday, November 12 and was very impressed by these school's program organization and student support. The events also received media attention from the Deseret New and the Salt Lake Tribune, as well as a few local papers. Districts and schools received three weeks to collect and compile data and the steering committee met in early December for a debrief and to determine next steps for further implementation in 2014. Since that time the Outreach and Access Department has entered and analyzed data for over 2,000 student, volunteer, site and steering committee surveys, as well as student participation sheets and have determined the following outcomes for our 2013 Utah College Application Week Pilot.

- **2311 students participated** in Utah College Application week.
- **75% of those participants submitted a survey**, reporting they had **submitted 1572 college applications**.
- Survey respondents reported:
 1. UCAW increased their **interest in going to college by 87%**.
 2. **55%** identified as **First Generation students**.
 3. **25%** reported **they did not previously plan to apply to college** before participating in UCAW.
 4. Of the 125 respondents from Ogden's 400 seniors **79% stated they did not plan to apply to college before this event**.
- **66% reported they did not have knowledge of the FAFSA**.
- Collectively through these pilot schools, **49 percent of the senior class participated**; Kearns had 80% of their seniors participate and Highland 75%.
- Parents, higher education access and admissions professionals, college students, community members donated **451 hours of volunteer service** to assist the schools in their efforts.

Participating in the American College Application Campaign and launching Utah's first College Application Week was one of the most rewarding and unifying K-16 collaborations in recent years. This program is low cost for schools although success is heavily reliant on school buy-in and the ability for the site coordinator to absorb the hours required for planning and implementation. Finally, further data analysis will be completed next fall as each participant's name will be run through the National Student Clearinghouse to determine how many of UCAW 2013 participants actually enrolled in postsecondary education for Fall 2014 semester.

Next Steps

- Report back to ACE through the completion of the national survey; based on national week determine Utah's 2014 dates.
- Share 2013 outcomes with the Chief Student Services Officers our, discuss the application barriers and possible solutions, as well as share expansion plans for 2014.

- Work with directors of GEAR UP and Utah College Advising Corps and the district personnel and principals in the schools in which they serve to discuss expansion to all their partners' schools.
- Discuss expansion possibility with USOE's College and Career Readiness Advisory Group.
- Explore possible MOU for school participation.
- Develop Utah specific site coordinator manual.
- Reconvene the UCAW steering committee to recommit pilot schools to participation, discuss further expansion to other schools in Granite District, and develop a 2014 implementation plan.

Commissioner's Recommendation

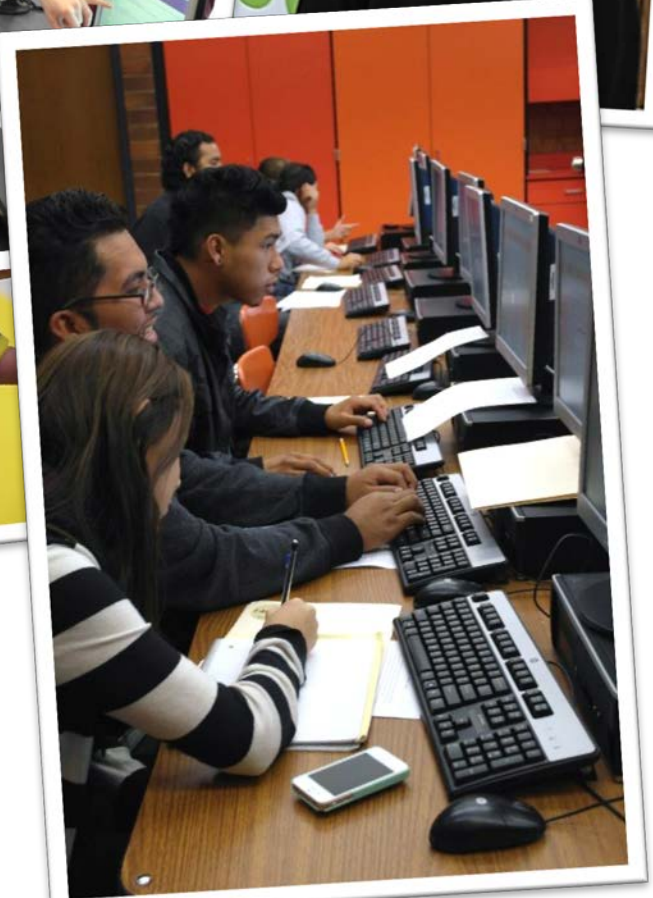
This is an information item only, no formal action by the Board is required. However, the Board is encouraged to read and take note of the information memorandum, and note that further follow-up will be handled by the Commissioner's Office as part of the Board's Participation strategic objective.

David L. Buhler
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/MMK
Attachments

UTAH COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK

STEPUP



I've Applied...What's Next?

Congratulations! You have taken the very important first step to going to college – you've applied! Once you have submitted your online application, colleges should be in touch with you to inform you of the status of your application. Make sure to check your email! If you have not been contacted by the school within four weeks of your submission, contact the admissions office to ask about your application status.

Don't forget your confirmation page

If you applied online, do not leave the computer lab without a physical printout of your confirmation page! Some schools require this page to be signed and mailed to the admissions office to complete the application process. Whether the school requires this form or not, you still need a printed copy for your records.

Follow up

Even though you've submitted your application online, there's still more to do to finish your application. You need to submit:

- High school transcripts—must be official (signed and with a school seal)
- Your application fee (if you chose the pay later option)
- ACT scores (if required)
- Letters of recommendation (if required)
- Your essay (if required)

Make sure to keep a copy of all submitted documents as well as your application page and confirmation page for your records.

Even after you're accepted to a college, there's still a lot of work to do to make your final decision and get ready. You'll want to consider what financial aid is available to at the colleges you're considering, and you'll want to decide if you want to live on campus or commute. Of course, once you decide on a college, you'll need to register as a new student, attend orientation, and enroll in classes.

The next steps for financial aid

Paying for college

After January 1st, you can complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online. You need to complete the FAFSA to be considered for grants, work-study funds, student loans, and many scholarships, so this is a very important step. You and/or your parents will want to submit your federal tax forms first. If possible, you should complete the FAFSA before March 1, because that's the priority deadline and schools can run out of federal aid.

Resources for Completing the FAFSA

Complete and submit the FAFSA as early as possible. The sooner you submit the form, the better chance you have of getting an affordable financial aid package.

- First, register for a FAFSA PIN at www.pin.ed.gov. You will need a PIN to complete your FAFSA from year to year.

- Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA) partners with schools statewide to host FAFSA Completion Nights. To find the event nearest you, go to www.facebook.com/uheaa/events or <http://blog.uheaa.org/events>.
- The U.S. Department of Education has resources to help you understand the types of financial aid, whether you qualify for aid, and how to apply for aid: <http://studentaid.ed.gov/>
- Speak with your family and school counselor about your financial aid options.

Resources for Finding Scholarships

Scholarships are a great way to pay for college, because they do not have to be repaid. Here are a few places to search for scholarships.

- Your school counselor or scholarship coordinator.
- The financial aid & scholarships webpage of the college or university you plan on attending
- Online scholarship search engines, such as:
 - www.cappex.com
 - www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org
 - www.zinch.com
 - www.fastweb.com
 - www.utahfutures.org

Remember, scholarships don't have to be repaid, but that doesn't mean they are easy to get. You need to dedicate time and energy to being a good candidate and to submitting scholarship applications. Don't be afraid to ask for help from counselors, teachers, friends who have also applied for scholarships, and family members!

UHEAA FAFSA Completion Nights Coming to a High School Near You! Assistance with Your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

For a complete calendar of events, please check www.facebook.com/uheaa/events or <https://blog.uheaa.org/events>. FAFSA Nights are usually held in February and March.

What to Bring

The following items are what you should bring to the event.

- Your Personal Identification Number (PIN number). If you do not already have a PIN or if you have forgotten your PIN and need to retrieve it, you can go here: www.pin.ed.gov
- If you have previously completed a FAFSA Worksheet, please bring it with you.
- Your Social Security Number.
- Your driver's license (if any).
- Your parents' 2013 W-2 forms (if you are a dependent student). If you earned income in 2013, you should also bring your 2013 W-2 forms.
- Your 2013 untaxed income records (e.g., Veteran's non-education benefit records, child support received, worker's compensation).
- Your current bank statements.
- Your current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bond and other investment records.
- Your resident alien registration or permanent resident card (if you are not a U.S. citizen).

UHEAA Contact Info:

Phone: 801-366-8477

Email: outreach@utahsbr.edu

www.blog.uheaa.org

www.twitter.com/uheaa

www.facebook.com/uheaa

www.youtube.com/uheaa

StepUp to Higher Education Contact Info:

Phone: 801-366-8492

Email: stepup@ushe.edu

www.stepuputah.com

www.twitter.com/stepuputah

www.facebook.com/stepuputah

www.youtube.com/stepuputah

Utah Application Fees at a glance

College or University	Application Fee	General Fee Waiver Policy	Special Fee Waiver/Option for College Application Week for those with demonstrated need
Brigham Young University	\$35	None	None
Dixie State University	\$35	Fee waivers are provided to low-income students, but require a letter from a school counselor verifying their status. Address letters to Dixie State University, New Student Programs.	Yes. Click submit without payment and the fee payment can be deferred for applications submitted this week.
LDS Business College	\$35	None	None
Salt Lake Community College	\$40	None	None
Snow College	\$30	Waived for attendance to any admission/scholarship open houses or other campus events (Snow Blast). Will waive for TRIO/GEAR UP students or students with demonstrated financial need. To obtain fee waiver contact the Admission's Office, speak with any admissions advisor or contact Admission Director at brandon.Wright@snow.edu, (435) 283-7154 or 1(800) 848-3399.	Yes. Students should use the pay later option and their fee payment will be waived for applications submitted during this week.
Southern Utah University	\$50	None	None, but students do have the option to submit without paying and then they will follow-up at a later date for the fee.
University of Utah	\$45	Offered to those with hardship. Must have one of the following: 1. Verification they are on state or federal government support (i.e. food stamps, Medicaid, etc.); 2. Letter from high school/GEAR UP/ Trio counselor stating that they are on free or reduced lunch, federal assistance form, or similar information; letter may also come from a clergy authority, or another U of U department; 3. ACT and SAT waiver accepted; 4. Once the applicant has submitted online admissions will match this verification and begin processing.	None
Utah State University	\$40	Must be able to show demonstrated need through government support such as Free and Reduced Lunch status.	Yes. Students need to submit the application without the payment and an advisor/counselor can email a letter to Director of Admissions at katie.nielsen@usu.edu demonstrating need and a waiver will be determined upon this submission.
Utah State University Eastern	\$40	Campus recruiters do give fee waivers at special events and school visits.	None, but students have the option to submit without paying and then they will follow-up at a later date for the fee.
Utah Valley University	\$35	Must have one of the following: 1. High School counselors have a waiver request form they can fill out should the student be in a qualifying state or federally funded program(free and reduced lunch etc.); 2. A UVU department advisor can also fill out a waiver request form, (Women's Center, TRIO, GEAR UP, etc.) 3. ACT waiver accepted. Additional questions can be directed to admissions@uvu.edu.	None.
Weber State University	\$30	No official policy. Informal process includes program directors evaluating individual need by student then awarding based on need. Please check with, Education Access and Outreach to see if they can provide financial support for the fee by calling an outreach advisor 801-626-7006.	None, but students do have the option to submit without paying and then they will follow-up at a later date for the fee.
Westminster College	\$50	Only offered to students who participate in a campus visit.	Yes. Students who apply to Westminster during this week will have their application fee waived through a special agreement for this event. Click fee waiver options at the end of application.

Other Fee Waivers	Application fee waiver site	Other Info
National Association for College Admission Counseling	http://www.nacacnet.org/STUDENTINFO/FEEWAVER/Pages/default.aspx	School's counselor has to fill out form.
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program	Have students get in contact with representatives, Linda McGrath at 801-342-2659, or Rachel Anderson at 801-857-7830, in order to be set up in their program to receive a waiver.	
ACT	Application fee waiver site	
SAT	http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers	max of 4 apps.

October 2013

Utah Application Reference Sheet

	Applicant is Participating in Concurrent Enrollment at this Institution in Fall 2013	Personal Information Required: Name, DOB, SSN, gender, race/ethnicity, first language, first-gen status, marital status, military status, mailing address, phone, email address	If Applicant has Undocumented Status	Semester Applying for: Type of Student (freshman, transfer, non-traditional, non-matriculated)	Students' Intended Major or Type of Degree Seeking	Residency Questions: How long you have resided in Utah, list of what you have been doing for past three years, driver's license number	Parent/Family Info: Name, relationship, address, phone, email, level of education, alumni status	Academic History: HS name/location, grad date, list former schools attended (including CE), and course taken.	Other	If the Applicant is not Planning to Enroll Fall 2014 for Mission / Military service / Family Issues etc.
BYU		Agree to live by honor code; Religious affiliation (if LDS - how long as a member, home ward, home stake); If not LDS - yes/no questions about excommunication status from LDS, affiliation with religions which allow plural marriage; History of probation, parole, convictions (if so provide explanation).		Preference of schools (BYU, BYU Idaho, BYU Hawaii, LDS BC); Housing plans.	Required	Required	Parents or sibling graduate from any BYU school	Required	Optional questions & essay questions (three at 300 words each) to be considered for additional university scholarships.	Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
DSU	Still must fill out application however, fee will be waived.	Required	Zero out SS# and leave US citizenship blank. They will follow up with HB 144 information.	Required	Required	Citizenship status	First-gen status	Required		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
LDS BC		Same as above (BYU)		Same as above (BYU)	Required	Required	Same as above (BYU)	Required	Same as above (BYU)	Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
SLCC	They are admitted and do not need to apply again. However, they must update their status with the CE office.	Required	Fill out the normal application and leave SS# blank they will be admitted as a non-resident. Then submit HB 144 waiver info. http://www.slcc.edu/enrollmentservices/docs/Residency_Affidavit.pdf	Required	Required	Citizenship status	First-gen status	SLCC CE status		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
Snow	Still must fill out application however, fee will be waived.	Required	Leave SS# blank, and they will follow-up with the HB 144 information.	Campus location; Previously Attended/Applied,	Required	Citizenship status	First-gen status	Required		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
SUU	Must fill out first time freshman application.	Required	Leave SS# blank.	Purpose for attending SUU (degree, personal enrichment, etc.)	Required	Citizenship status	Required	Required		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.

USU	Still must fill out application however, fee will be waived.	Religious affiliation; Family members who have attended USU; Felony convictions - if so need to fill out separate form.	Zero out SS# and leave US citizenship blank. They will follow up with HB 144 information.	List regional campuses planning to attend; For what purpose you are taking classes (bachelor degree, associate degree, certificate, etc.)	Required	Required	Both living parents and spouse.	List of senior English, math, science, & history classes; Have you ever been expelled, suspended, disciplined, or put on probation status, HS or college - if so need to attach a detailed statement of explanation.		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
USU-E	Still must fill out application at however, fee will be waived.	Same as above (USU)	Zero out SS# and leave US citizenship. They will follow up with HB 144 information.	Campus Location	Required	Required	Same as above (USU)	Same as above (USU)		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
UU	Only applicable for AMES high school students.	Required	Under the citizenship portion of the application, indicate that you are requesting HB 144 consideration. The HB 144 waiver needs to be submitted at the same time as the admissions application. http://admissions.utah.edu/apply/residency/hb144.php	Required	Required	Citizenship info (country of birth & citizenship status).	Parent's state of legal residence & how long they have resided in Utah continuously; With whom you currently reside; Come from a single-parent household; Primary language at home; Extraordinary family obligations (yes/no questions).	Self-reported GPA & ACT/SAT score; All courses taken (grades 9-12); Opportunity to describe any extenuating circumstances that may have impacted academic achievement (500 characters max).	In order to be considered for Diversity and Leadership aid there is no longer a separate application and depending on students answers they might be selected for consideration. Applicants need to thoroughly complete the application and demonstrate in ALL answers why they are a good candidate for the UU.	Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
UVU	Fill out the Returning Student application, no fee required.	Plans to interrupt schooling for military, or church mission; Plan to attend evening/weekend classes; How did you find out about UVU	Fills out freshman application, and leave SS# and DL fields blank. After applicant submits, prints out the HB 144 waiver and then submit it. http://www.uvu.edu/admissions/information/HB144.html	Required	Required	Citizenship status	First-gen status	Required	Have to enter both SSN & DL # to proceed not sure what process is if you don't have one).	Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
Weber	They are admitted and do not need to apply again.	Required	They are working on a new section for status and will have students self identify. Use 999 for SSN#. They will follow-up with HB 144 information.	Required	Required	Citizenship status	First-gen status	Required		Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.
Westminster		Part or full time; Plans to live on campus; Tuition reimbursement from employer (if so, specify); How did you hear about Westminster.	Leave SS# blank.	Required	Required	Citizenship status	Parent employer name, occupation, marital status, name of colleges or universities attended & degrees earned, siblings or relatives who have attended Westminster.	Required	List any jobs you have held in past three years & attach resume; Academic achievements (list); Extracurricular activities (list); What three factors were most important in decision to apply to Westminster; Personal essay (250-500 words) - questions provided; History of academic or behavior misconduct that resulted in probation, suspension, removal or dismissal, attach separate sheet providing description of incident.	Applicants should apply NOW even if they believe they will not be here in Fall 2014. Once admitted they can seek a deferment at the discretion of the institution.

Deseret News

Mayor Ben McAdams, educators encourage students to apply to college

By Benjamin Wood , Deseret News

Published: Monday, Nov. 11 2013 3:38 p.m. MST



Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams talks to a group of Cottonwood High School students Monday, Nov. 11, 2013, before they fill out college application paperwork. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

MURRAY — This week, hundreds of Utah high school seniors will submit college and university applications as part of a push to increase enrollment in higher education.

Among those students is Cottonwood High School senior Berkely Mitchell, who plans on applying to Dixie State and Southern Utah universities on her way to becoming a pediatric anesthesiologist.

"It's beyond scary," she said of the impending end of her high school days. "I'm an inquisitive person, so I'm probably going to have a lot (of questions). It's nice to have resources available."

The Utah College Application Week, which began Monday, is a pilot program involving three school districts and sponsored by the Utah System of Higher

Education. During the week, volunteers at eight Utah high schools will assist students in submitting their applications. Application fee waivers are also available to low-income and first-generation students to provide extra incentive.



Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams talks to a group of Cottonwood High School students Monday, Nov. 11, 2013, before they fill out college application paperwork. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

"We're really targeting our disadvantaged students to give them the opportunity," said Nate Salizar, a community school coordinator with the United Way of Salt Lake who works with Cottonwood High School. "It's daunting, especially for first-generation students whose parents may not have had that experience. So this simplifies the process."

Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams also participated in the kickoff to the week at Cottonwood High School. He spoke of his own educational experience, like donating plasma to have some extra money for a social life and the decision to run for student body president at the University of Utah that sent him "astray" into political life.

"With your commitment and your work, you can make it through college," he told students. "A college education is accessible to you and it is the door to a bright and prosperous future."



Cottonwood High School students Gabby Barton and Lydia Kane look at a college brochure as they fill out college application forms, Monday, Nov. 11, 2013. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

Cottonwood High Principal Alan Parrish said roughly one-third of his students traditionally enroll in college after graduation. He said hopefully the event contributes to an increase of that number while also helping students understand that applying to college isn't as difficult as they may have assumed.

Utah College Application Week is the latest initiative by the Utah System of Higher Education to boost post-secondary enrollment and degree attainment. Recently, education officials launched a "15 To Finish" campaign aimed at encouraging students to take a full course load in order to save money and more quickly complete their degrees.

A [recent survey](#) conducted by the Utah Foundation found that 90 percent of the high school class of 2013 intended to pursue continued education or job training following graduation.



Annie Rees, Jesse Lowden and Taylor Dabrowski listen as Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams talks to a group of Cottonwood High School students Monday, Nov. 11, 2013, before they fill out college application paperwork. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

But according to the Utah System of Higher Education, only 54 percent of high school graduates and 41 percent of low-income students enroll in post-secondary education immediately after their high school graduation.

"There is nothing more important students can do for their futures than graduate from high school and go on to graduate from college," Melissa Miller Kincart, assistant commissioner for Outreach and Access, said in a prepared statement. "We want all students in Utah to know they are college material and offer them the support and information they need to get through the college application process."

As part of Utah College Application Week, students who complete their application will receive an "I Applied" sticker and are encouraged to tweet their experience using the hashtag #IApplied.

Email: benwood@deseretnews.com, Twitter: bjaminwood

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Link: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865590361/Mayor-Ben-McAdams-educators-encourage-students-to-apply-to-college.html>

The Salt Lake Tribune

'Leap of faith:' Utah students get help applying for college

Education • New application week targets low-income, first-generation students for guidance.

BY LINDSAY WHITEHURST

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 12, 2013 06:49AM

UPDATED: NOVEMBER 12, 2013 01:01AM

Al Hartmann | The Salt Lake Tribune Cottonwood High guidance counselor Amanda Colton helps Liz Battad, left, Jake Shapiro and Dylan Cooley with the online Utah college applications. Cottonwood High School seniors applied online to Utah colleges Monday November 11.

Camila Gramondi has been working toward college since the seventh grade, and the 18-year-old knows why she wants a business degree.

"[I've] just [seen] my parents struggling so much because they didn't have a college education," said Gramondi, a senior at Cottonwood High School.

But there's still plenty of work ahead to finish up, between high school classes, extracurricular activities and work. On Monday she tackled the next big step: the college application.

"It's our senior year, we're so close and it's nerve-racking!" said Ivett Gonzalez, a 17-year-old aspiring teacher.

About 60 Cottonwood High students, many of them low-income or prospective first-generation college students, came to the school library for help with that all-important but often complex first step. It's part of College Application Week, a new effort led by the Utah System of Higher Education to give students, especially those from underserved groups, guidance on accessing college.

"We have parents come in and they don't even know how to begin," said Martha Camarillo Freston, a college access advisor for Utah College Advising Corps.

Higher education officials are hoping to close a sizable gap that seems to open up between middle school and high school graduation: While more than 90 percent of middle school students say they want to go to college, only about 54 percent of graduates immediately enroll in higher education, according to USHE. That rate drops to 41 percent for low-income students.

USHE is working with eight Wasatch Front schools in three districts to set aside time during the school day to fill out applications, provide advisors to help and offer application fee waivers for low-income students.

“We’re getting at the school level, and bringing administration, faculty and staff on board,” said Melissa Miller Kincart, assistant commissioner for outreach and access at USHE.

Most college applications are available online, but the process is far from self-explanatory. Gramondi, for example, paused while typing her high school courses onto a form for the University of Utah application.

“What does this mean when it says ‘college algebra?’ ” she asked Freston.

“Do you remember taking algebra at all?” Freston said, and flipped open Gramondi’s transcript, which was printed and prepared for all the students at the event.

“Yep,” she said, telling Gramondi her high school course fills the requirement.

Freston is hoping to help every graduating senior at Cottonwood High apply to at least one college — usually, less than half of the 450 graduating seniors apply, school officials said. The process has changed significantly over the last two decades, Salt Lake County Mayor Ben McAdams told the Cottonwood High students.

“I didn’t know how the application process worked,” he said. “I kind of knew I needed to take the ACT.”

He signed up to take the test, but cracked the books to study only once — and then left in a hurry when friends invited him to a haunted house.

McAdams ended up at Weber State University and transferred to the University of Utah, where he began his political career as president of the student body, and later went to Columbia Law School in New York. He paid for his education with Pell Grants and student loans, scrounging entertainment money from the occasional donation trip to the blood bank.

“A college education is accessible to you and it’s a door to a bright and prosperous future,” he said. “Sometimes it’s a leap of faith, but if you believe in yourself you can succeed.”

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Link: <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/57114294-78/college-students-application-education.html.csp>

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