



Strategy #9: Increase College Participation

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From: Ryan Farley, Associate VP for Enrollment Management

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Charge and Background

As nearly all activities at SLCC are done with an eye towards improving the student experience - thus increasing college participation - it's always challenging to identify and highlight just a small fraction of an entire year of work as representative of the collective efforts of so many. It is also disingenuous to attribute outcomes and accomplishments to any one committee, CWT, or group of individuals. All play a role in positioning SLCC as the most affordable, flexible, convenient, student friendly, and diverse provider of higher education in the Salt Lake valley.

With that in mind, the following were identified by Cabinet as outcomes to work towards over the 2021-22 academic year:

1. Implement a new scholarship awarding platform that improves access and functionality for both the Scholarships department and Institutional Advancement.
2. Continue translation of Admissions/Marketing/Recruitment materials into Spanish
3. Build out PLA (technology, personnel, etc.)
4. Develop and implement recruitment strategies to support growth in the following areas: Adult Students (first-time and some college), Male Students, and West Side Communities.
5. Analyze the impact of federal, state, and college funds on enrollment, retention and completion.
6. Work with DSA to lead conversations and communicate findings on the causes of the decline in higher education participation.

Approach

1. **Implement a new scholarship awarding platform that improves access and functionality for both the Scholarships department and Institutional Advancement.** ScholarshipUniverse, a product of CampusLogic, was selected in April via the RFP process to be the new scholarship awarding platform for SLCC. The platform provides expanded capabilities and services in the following areas:
 - a. Easier management of scholarship committee application reviews and awarding with digital workflows.
 - b. Accelerated review processes due to configurable/customizable scoring and ranking rules.

- c. Automated student communications and alerts to assist in student data collection, including text messaging (a tremendous benefit in alerting students to missing documents/information).
- d. One-stop shop and application for all scholarships, with external scholarships being added/vetted by CampusLogic personnel and added to the database.
- e. Adaptively matches students with targeted, relevant scholarship opportunities.
- f. Multiple award cycles available at the same time to ensure scholarship dollars don't go underutilized.
- g. Maintains donor profiles, allowing downloadable thank-you letters from the platform.
- h. Easy filtering categories so donors can identify potential applicant pool based on donor criteria.

Final contract review is under way. The implementation schedule for ScholarshipUniverse is set to begin in early June and be completed by the end of August. This will allow for ScholarshipUniverse to be fully available by the beginning of the 2022-23 scholarship awarding cycle on October 1st and AwardSpring will be retired.

2. **Continue translation of Admissions/Marketing/Recruitment Materials into Spanish.** The 2021-22 academic year saw exciting new developments in the continued effort to provide bilingual content to our burgeoning LatinX population, as well as a marked increase in Spanish-language marketing pieces. The Admissions and Concurrent Enrollment departments piloted college efforts to provide one-click translation of website context from English to Spanish:
 - a. https://slccbruins.force.com/ERx_Forms_Portal_Register
 - b. <http://www.slcc.edu/concurrentenrollment/index.aspx>

Approval has been obtained from Institutional Marketing to move forward with translation of the Admissions and Financial Aid & Scholarships landing pages over the summer of 2022.

Additionally, key documents including the Admissions "Getting Started" guide, Financial Aid options guide, SLCC FAFSA workshop, and Concurrent Enrollment checklist have been translated. An additional exciting development is the effort to provide bilingual phone support via Cisco Finesse phone transfer options and bilingual staff in the Contact Center. Enrollment Management will continue to focus on creating bilingual content throughout the upcoming year(s) and expects this will be an ongoing objective.

3. **Build out PLA (technology, personnel, etc.)** – Two accomplishments of significance have occurred in SLCC's effort to expand credit for prior learning. A [website](#) has been developed that is the repository for PLA content and the ever-increasing number of agreements and opportunities. Sections for students, faculty, staff, and general training are under development with anticipated completion by Fall 2022.

Also, beginning May 1st, Valerie Delleville was hired as the new Director of Credit for Prior Learning, reporting through Assistant Provost Rachel Lewis. Valerie will be charged with continued development of the PLA website and creating training and instruction to academic departments and other key stakeholders on expanding PLA. She will also work closely with the

Office of the Registrar and Academic Records to ensure policy and procedure for awarding PLA stays up-to-date and gets transcribed for students in a timely manner.

4. Develop and implement a recruitment and strategic enrollment management plan to support growth in the following areas: Adult Students (first-time and some college), Male Students, and West Side CWT.

A pilot done to better support adult learners has provided insights in adopting a case management model through the use and support of Admissions “navigators,” who provide personalized information on application, financial aid, scholarships, career planning, and numerous wrap-around services via text/email/phone. A total of 5,902 students identifying as age 20 years and older were included for Fall 2021 semester, and contacted via either text or phone through the Admissions adult learner team using the case management model.

Details can be found in Appendix A. General results were as follows:

- 2,509 total admit texts sent, with 40.77% registering for class(es).
- 2,390 calls made to adult learners, with 28.62% registering for class(es).
- From November 11th (implementation date) through March 9th (application deadline for Spring 2022) the Admissions Adult Team had 292 appointments booked through Schedule Once, an increase of more than double the previous four months.
- While not numerically quantifiable, the Admissions adult learner team reports much better engagement with students, maintaining contact with many of these students through matriculation.

While there is not currently a way to automate this process through Salesforce/Enrollment Rx, we are exploring the use “task reminders” in the CRM to see if there’s a way to further automate the adult learner engagement process.

Regarding West Side efforts, the West Side CWT, now renamed to “Engaging Communities,” has been actively involved in shaping recruiting and programming efforts for the West Valley City/Kearns communities. Of particular interest is the opportunity to leverage the new medical facility being built south of the West Valley Center on 5600 West by the University of Utah. Plans to expand SLCC’s health sciences programs to the West Valley Center and ultimately build out space dedicated to those programs. Collaboration with Institutional Marketing has also led to Spanish-specific marketing efforts included in Appendix B – West Valley marketing plan. Full details regarding the Engaging Communities CWT are available in its year-end report.

5. Analyze the impact of federal, state, and college funds on enrollment, retention and completion. Two studies of significance were completed in collaboration with DSA to help determine the effectiveness of college tactics on disbursing student aid as follows:

- COVID-19 Block Grants and Effects on Student Retention - Appendix C contains the full report. We found a statistically significant relationship between receiving a block grant and retention – students who received the grant were more likely to return to SLCC. The

was particularly true for historically marginalized populations, female students, and adult students.

- **Debt Forgiveness** - Appendix D contains the full report. We found that of the students who had debt discharged from Spring 2020 and Summer 2020, only 10.7% of those students returned to SLCC within one to two semesters from their last date of attendance. Furthermore, only 29.2% of those returning students chose to return for a second semester. The correlation between debt discharge and re-enrollment at SLCC was found to not be statistically significant.

The recent addition of a scholarship dashboard for the Advancement Office is offering some new insight into student outcomes associated with scholarship aid. Not surprisingly, students who receive scholarships are more likely to retain for the first year, and as funding increases so does the percent of students who retain:

Scholarships at a Glance

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Awarded	\$735,535	\$709,872	\$746,345	\$1,298,191	\$1,711,537	\$1,483,195
All Awards	394	328	374	751	847	635
Percent of Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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Lastly, worth noting are the sizeable increases in the number of financial aid offers (+28.3%), offer amounts (+31.3%), total amount paid (+33.3%), and total number of awards paid year-to-date (31.7%).



Financial Aid by Aid Year

6. **Work with DSA to lead conversations and communicate findings on the causes of the decline in higher education participation.** Conversations continue at SLCC with both internal and external partners to discuss the decline in higher education participation. The factors contributing to the decline are numerous, complicated, and not easily solved. Obviously, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt and are universally accepted as a factor disproportionately affecting community colleges. Recent publications in higher education journals and publications mirror many of the challenges SLCC is facing as a comprehensive community college in recruiting and retaining students:

- *The biggest influencing factor is a strong economy.* Utah leads the nation in economic growth and lowest unemployment rates, with strong increases in wages also drawing more people to the workforce. Add to that inflationary pressures being experienced and an increasingly unaffordable housing market, the effect on personal finances is to move college further down the list of priorities.
- Demographics are shifting. Specifically in Utah, a larger percentage of high school graduates come from historically marginalized populations, (specifically LatinX), first generation (56% at SLCC), and non-college-legacy families who simply do not pursue higher education at the same level as other population segments.
- The value proposition. Continuing to combat the narrative that a college education is unnecessary, overpriced, and unattainable. We must redefine what the college experience is - from short-term certificates to longer-term degrees; that it is affordable, flexible, and ultimately the absolute best investment to weather times of economic uncertainty, instability, and ultimately lead to personal satisfaction in career, family, and health.
- It's just too complicated. This is a bullet point that we can, and do, continue to work on. A complete review of the "Enroll Student" process map was performed three years ago, with significant resources committed to process improvement and new technologies (Enrollment Rx, new admissions application, CampusLogic StudentForms, Semester Checklist, College Scheduler, chatbot, etc.) However, we continue to experience setbacks - some of which are self-inflicted - that ultimately lead to prospective students not continuing in the enrollment life cycle. Refer to the recommendations portion of the report for additional details.

Of note, Institutional Marketing is currently working with a third-party consultant holding focus groups for various student segments, including traditional, non-traditional, parents, and high school counselors. Results will be forthcoming in the next month. Additionally, Blue Icon will be performing a NASFAA "Standards of Excellence" review of the Financial Aid & Scholarships department in October 2022, including recommendations for improving access to student aid.

Recommendations

- **Continue translation of Admissions/Marketing/Recruitment materials into Spanish** with specific emphasis on the SLCC website moving towards being fully bilingual.
- **Update the "Enroll Student" process map** to include changes made over the past four years since Clariteq Consulting's effort. Review all details of the current process from first contact to matriculation, identify any opportunities, and streamline the path to matriculation (and beyond).
- **Research and potentially engage third-party services** such as [CollegeApp](#) and [Motimatic](#) as potential partners in targeted recruiting of adult learners and engaging with SLCC stop-outs. With limited ability to expand the available staff to do outreach, leveraging technology to target areas of opportunity may make sense.

- **Collaborate with USHE and the UCAC advisors** to revive FAFSA completion efforts at the high-school level. Utah fell to 50th of 51 states and territories in the U.S. on [FAFSA completion rates](#) by state. This statistic is alarming, as FAFSA completion rates are a leading indicator of higher education participation.