Salt Lake Community College Office of Admissions External Review

Division of Student Affairs 2024-2025 Program Review

REVIEWERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Admissions Office at Salt Lake Community College recently completed a comprehensive program review in support of the institution's ongoing efforts toward reflection, assessment, and continuous improvement. This process enabled the department to evaluate its functions and services, identify areas of strength, and recognize opportunities for further development. A site visit and external review by a team of higher education professionals provided additional insights, commendations, and strategic recommendations.

The review included 24 listening sessions with 98 individuals from within the Admissions Office and stakeholders across SLCC's campuses. These conversations revealed strong commitment

from the Admissions team and highlighted areas of success as well as recurring themes that reflect current challenges and opportunities for growth.

The review committee's findings include several commendations for the Admissions Office, particularly in areas where the department is performing well and making significant contributions to student access and success. In addition, the committee identified common themes and recommendations.

KEY THEMES IDENTIFIED:

1. Uncertainty Around the USHE Common Application and Direct Admit Process
2. Concerns with the Update Application Process
3. Handoff to Orientation and Advising
4. Complexity in the Application Process and Decision Tree
5. Need for Greater Role Clarification
6. Campuses Feeling Unheard
7. Sense of Belonging

In addition to these findings, the review team commended the Admissions Office for its dedication, adaptability, and student-centered mission. The final report includes specific recommendations designed to guide strategic planning, enhance collaboration, and position the department for future success in an evolving higher education landscape.

COMMENDATIONS

This section of the review highlights six key areas in which the Admissions Department has demonstrated exceptional performance and deserves formal commendation. Based on interviews, the self-study written by the department, and the program review team, these areas reflect a consistent pattern of excellence, responsiveness, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Each commendation outlined below showcases how the department has contributed meaningfully to student success, operational efficiency, and the broader mission, vision, and values of the college.

TIMELY AND MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

Across numerous interviews conducted throughout the college, the Admissions Department received consistent praise for the timeliness and efficiency of its communications. Faculty, staff, and students alike highlighted how swiftly the department responded to inquiries and resolved issues as they arose. This responsiveness was especially evident in their use of Microsoft Teams chats, where team members provided near real-time support to individuals across all campuses. Whether addressing student application concerns, clarifying procedural questions, or assisting other departments with enrollment-related matters, the Admissions staff demonstrated a commendable commitment to accessibility and service. The department's ability to maintain clear and prompt communication has not only streamlined internal processes but has also

significantly enhanced the overall experience for prospective and current students. Their performance in this area stood out as a key strength in our review.

STUDENT CENTERED FOCUS

We heard repeatedly that students were the driver of decisions. SLCC and the Admissions Office are committed to placing students at the center of every process, service, and decision. It was mentioned several times that Admissionsir consistently strives to create a welcoming, supportive, and responsive admissions experience. Through communication, application processes, and proactive outreach efforts, the Admissions team ensures that students feel valued, understood, and empowered from their first point of contact with the College. Their dedication to continuous improvement and equity-minded practices further strengthens SLCC's mission to increase access and support for all learners.

MAXIMIZING LIMITED RESOURCES

Many interview groups were asked what the Admissions team could do more of. Several of the responses highlighted that there was not a ton more they believed Admissions could do, given that they do so much and do it well. What was also noted with this commendation is the fact that the admissions team does the most with the resources that they have but it is clear they need more resource support. This was mentioned more than once by several groups that work tangentially with the admissions team. It's great that they can accomplish what they can accomplish, but it is very evident that resources are too constrained for the scale, scope, and quality of events and services the team provides.

STRONG COLLABORATION

Even though many of the individuals we visited did not report through the same reporting lines as Admissions, it was echoed multiple times how collaborative the Admissions Office team was. Admissions exemplifies a strong culture of collaboration both within their department and across campus. Their proactive partnerships with academic programs, campuses, and external stakeholders ensure that admissions processes are aligned with institutional goals and student needs. By fostering open communication, shared problem-solving, and a spirit of teamwork, the Admissions team strengthens the overall student experience.

GREAT CULTURE & MORALE

Department culture and staff morale were favorably noted across several teams. Those from within the department really appreciate the positive support they receive from colleagues. There is a strong feeling of camaraderie and folks felt like they could rely on each other as needed. Those that interface with Admissions felt similarly. Even though there are acknowledged challenges with processes and systems, the people and the environment keep folks engaged in the work of helping students in the best ways they can.

STAFF TRAINING & ONBOARDING

Since the previous program review, the Admissions Office has made significant strides in strengthening its onboarding and training processes. While staff turnover remains a natural challenge in the admissions field, it is clear that employees are receiving outstanding

preparation that not only equips them for success within the department but also makes them highly competitive for other opportunities across campus. Staff consistently expressed high levels of satisfaction with the onboarding and training program, noting that the thorough 4–5 week process provided them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to excel in their roles. The Admissions Office is to be commended for creating a supportive and intentional training environment that fosters employee growth, institutional loyalty, and long-term success.

EFFICIENT CRM USE
The team is pleased with the implementation and use of the CRM (Salesforce). There are those that remember the challenges of not having one (6 years ago) and now they are able to more efficiently and effectively process applications. There were also commendations for how robust the current communications plans are.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS REVIEWS, ASSESSMENTS & AUDITS
The Admissions Department is also to be commended for its strong follow-through on recommendations from previous reviews, assessments, and audits. Feedback from the Strategic Enrollment Management Collaborative Work Team, Student Affairs Annual Assessments, and the CampusWorks audit was clearly taken to heart, resulting in tangible, impactful improvements. Notable among these are the successful redesign of the student application process, enhancements to Salesforce functionality and institutional training on portal login issues, and the department's proactive role in assessing student services needs at the opening of the Herriman Campus. These efforts reflect a department not only receptive to feedback but deeply committed to continuous improvement and institutional goals. Their responsiveness and execution have led to measurable enhancements in the student experience and operational efficiency, positioning the department as a model of effective, data-informed change.

HIGHLIGHTED THEMES & TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

UNKNOWN OF THE USHE COMMON APPLICATION/DIRECT ADMIT PROCESS
Anticipated changes related to the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) Common Application and Direct Admit process are set to launch October 2025 and has created institutional uncertainty. This first iteration will most likely not include transcripts, campus, major, residency or citizenship. Proactive planning, ongoing communication, and alignment with system-wide developments will be essential in navigating this shift.
- Recommendation: We currently understand that there is not a general studies/undecided option on the application. This could be a good landing place for students to be directly admitted and then encouraged to pick a major.
- Recommendation: Assessment of current application to see if there is anything that can be simplified OR collected at a later time (example- could there be information collected at orientation or registration instead of admission)
- Recommendation: There is a good chance that applications will increase and come in earlier for SLCC through this direct admission process, which gives SLCC the

opportunity to expand the prospect pool, to engage with a student longer and increase yield. A financial investment on personnel and operating to accommodate the increase in student application and needs should be addressed.

UPDATE APPLICATION IS THE MOST COMMON CONCERN

The most frequently cited operational issue was confusion around the Update Application process. Stakeholders noted that it creates barriers for students and staff alike, signaling the need for clearer procedures, better communication, and potential system improvements. Students do the updated application for multiple reasons (change of major, new semester, etc) This process makes a student do a simplified version of the application, but resets the application needing repetitive review of residency, major, etc. The process is repetition for students and time consuming and unnecessary for admissions processors and residency.

- Recommendation: Create processes that could eliminate the update application.
  a. Is there a time frame a student could be out of school and not reapply (up to 3 years matriculation is open).
  b. If a student is changing their term, could they do a deferment rather than a new application.
  c. A simplified change of major form that does not require an updated application.

UNCLEAR HANDOFF TO ORIENTATION & ADVISING

Many interviews surfaced that there is a lack of clarity for both staff and students around the handoff between Admissions, Orientation, and Advising. New students are given next steps upon admission but, depending on a student situation, it is not as clear what step(s) should be taken first. This leads to student swirl between these three groups. Generally, there was also a desire to gain clarity around who is responsible for advising prospective students.

- Recommendation: Create an ordered list of next steps that can be posted on the website and shared with students via their admissions letter. In listing these steps, it should also be noted which office (admissions, orientation, advising, and others if necessary) can assist students through the completion of those steps.
- Recommendation: Bring the Admissions, Orientation, Advising, and other student services offices together to define the student journey and where those handoff points should be (to better clarify next steps for students and who should be helping at what point)
- Recommendation: Work with Advising and Career Services to either train admissions staff or designate advising FTE that can provide unofficial transcript evaluations/field questions for prospective students that need pre-admission advising or are undecided students. If FTE cannot be allocated, work with Advising to develop self-service advising guides that admissions staff can share with prospective students

APPLICATION PROCESS/DECISION TREE

Helping students select their correct program on the application is a solution that a number of groups believe would assist with correcting some downstream issues as students continue their onboarding process. Assisting students through this process was a primary request from those representing Salt Lake Tech.

- Recommendation: Cross train admissions staff to be able to better talk about SLTC programs, where they are offered, and the differences between those and UG programs. Provide thorough coaching, decision tree resources, etc. to provide admissions staff with the tools to ask the right questions to get students to the correct program on the correct campus.
- Recommendation: Build a decision tree that helps students find their major, program, or desired campus location BEFORE they begin the application process (or build this into the application itself). A.I. can be leveraged to assist in building out this tool. If it is preferred to build it into the application itself, include logic that let's students know that a certain program is only offered at a certain campus or if a program is closed/limited entry and a student will be placed in "general studies" first, etc. Another option might be to list campus first, then only list the programs that are available by campus. But it is recommended to list program first, then ensure the logic only shows students which campuses house their programs. Ensure this campus selection is reinforced in the admissions letter.

Example of decision tree logic:
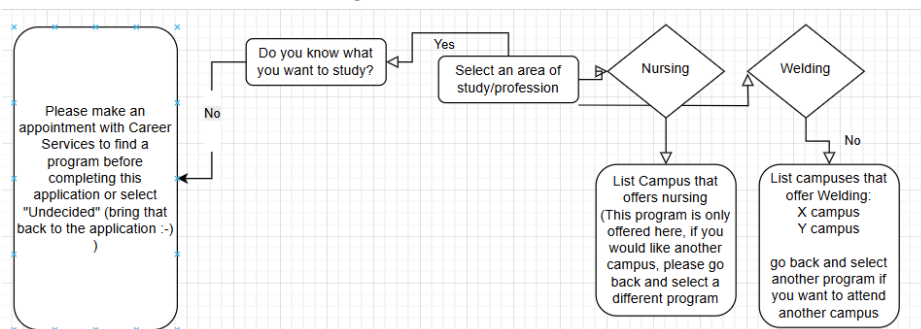
ROLE CLARIFICATION

At the college, there are three information centers that field questions by current and prospective students. During the interview sessions, numerous points of confusion were reported.   While the admissions hub focuses solely on the admissions process, the desk sits in a central position of the student center, a "center stage" if you will, for students new or unfamiliar with campus.

While the admissions process is integral and key to the college, this single focus creates a "bounce" when students have key questions that cannot be answered at the admissions hub. And many individuals reported that there were calls or visitors often directed at the admissions hub that were not their focus, so the individuals had to be referred elsewhere.

The contact center maintains a virtual or remote information source, but this recommendation also should clarify which point of contact will be necessary when students are referred to either the hub or the infodesk. For example, how could the contact center be involved in the shared mission, identifying proper referral contacts based upon each department.

- Recommendation: The admissions hub, infodesk, and contact center each have individual missions and separate duties. As part of this department review, the team recommends that there be some clarification of duties, adjustment of duties, or shared mission between these three distinct entities.
- Recommendation: The infodesk and admissions hub perhaps share space, so that admissions personnel may focus on their necessary function, while also having nearby infodesk personnel to handle questions outside of the admissions hub's purpose.

CAMPUS FEELING UNHEARD

Redwood/Taylorsville Campus serves as the main campus for the college, and therefore the larger share of services provided to students. During the interview sessions, many personnel who worked at the other campuses shared concerns that they needed resources, personnel, or "felt unheard."

- Recommendation: Training to ensure everyone shares the same information across all campuses to provide a consistency of service. At locations that are not considered administrative hubs, it's difficult to serve unique student needs. Many of the long standing employees have institutional knowledge that, if those individuals were to leave, would be lost to the department. Each campus is unique and serves a unique population, so how could this be leveraged to the department's advantage?
- Recommendation: Hold a recruitment kickoff each fall at all campuses. This recruitment kickoff can highlight upcoming recruitment efforts by the Admissions staff and invite campus partners to be involved in the recruitment process. At SLCC, everyone can be a recruiter.
- Recommendation: Teams chats were often highlighted across interview groups as one of the most positive developments. However, many individuals reported "not knowing who to contact" or which chat thread to engage when they needed specific information (i.e. residency, advising, admissions, etc.) Institutional messaging on how to get immediate answers for the other campuses should be conveyed clearly, rather than depending on individual knowledge or relationships.

BELONGING

SLCC, as the largest community college in the state, has a more difficult time branding itself against the larger institutions. Yet for students to feel a sense of belonging at the college, many groups felt that recruitment and enrollment could be strengthened with further resources, personnel, and strategic purpose.

- Recommendation: Further resources should be requested through the IBP process at the college to strengthen recruitment efforts. Currently, the budget only allows for swag for the first portion of the year, and generally runs out before the final months of the

academic year. Additionally, events are limited to specific groups or limited numbers of attendees, as there is little budget to increase the reach to more individuals. This recommendation does not fall fully on the admissions department, however. To reach this goal and fulfill the recommendation would require leadership to support the strategic goal to build the SLCC branding and the resources required to meet that end. In multiple groups, the shortfall in funding/swag/events was mentioned as part of the limitation on each of their jobs.

The review team is making this recommendation to increase leadership's awareness of these shortfalls, and so that they may take action where necessary to allow admissions to fulfill their already excellent work as recruiters, events specialists, and the voice of the college for potential students.

CONCLUSION

The Admissions Office at Salt Lake Community College has cultivated a strong, student-centered culture that is widely recognized and appreciated across the institution. Throughout the program review process, it became clear that others genuinely enjoy collaborating with this team — a testament to their positive morale, commitment to service, and collaborative spirit.

Despite operating within systems and processes that often require creative workarounds, the team has demonstrated exceptional resilience and dedication. They have worked diligently to perform at their highest capacity, even when structural limitations have presented challenges. However, moving forward, it will be critical to address systemic pain points at their root, rather than continuing to rely on temporary solutions. Doing so will empower the Admissions team to elevate their service even further and will reduce operational inefficiencies that impact both staff and students.

The upcoming implementation of the Utah System of Higher Education's (USHE) Direct Admissions initiative makes the need for proactive change even more urgent. Immediate attention to the recommendations outlined in this report — particularly those related to campus and major selection, residency processes, and the support of undecided students — will position the Admissions Office and SLCC as leaders in the statewide transition.

By building on the existing strengths of the Admissions team and addressing known areas of concern, SLCC has the opportunity to create a more seamless, supportive, and student-ready admissions experience. The dedication and talent already present in the Admissions Office provide a strong foundation for this next phase of growth and innovation.