



Direct Admissions Minnesota Pilot Program Year One

February 1, 2022

Authors

Meredith Fergus

Director of Research and SLEDS

Tel: 651-259-3963

Meredith.Fergus@state.mn.us

Wendy Robinson

Assistant Commissioner for
Programs, Policy, and Grants

Tel: 651-259-3903

Wendy.Robinson@state.mn.us

About the Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding more than \$210 million annually in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

About This Report

This is a legislative-mandated report. As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197, this report cost approximately \$738 to prepare, including staff time.

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350

Saint Paul, MN 55108-5227

Tel: 651.642.0567 or 800.657.3866

TTY Relay: 800.627.3529

Fax: 651.642.0675

Email: info.ohe@state.mn.us

Contents

- Direct Admissions Minnesota..... 1
 - Background..... 1
 - Figure 1. College Enrollment Rates for Minnesota Public High School Graduates in the Immediate Fall after High School Graduation 2
 - Table 1. College Enrollment Rates for Minnesota Public High School Graduates, Graduates Enrolled in College in the Immediate Fall after High School Graduation by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity 2
 - Figure 2. Year 1 to Year 2 College Persistence Rates for Minnesota High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity..... 3
 - Table 2. Year 1 to Year 2 College Persistence Rates for Minnesota High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity..... 3
 - Figure 3. Cumulative College Completion Rates for High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity 4
 - Table 3. Cumulative College Completion Rates for High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity 4
 - Figure 4. Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2021 Estimates by Basic Race Groups 5
 - Direct Admissions Program 5
 - Implementation in Other States 6
 - Implementation in Minnesota..... 6
 - Challenges and Recommendations..... 9
- References..... 10
- Appendix A Legislation for Direct Admissions Minnesota 11
- Appendix B Direct Admissions Implementation Working Group 12

Direct Admissions Minnesota

The 2021 Minnesota Legislature funded Direct Admissions Minnesota, a new pilot program, offering automatic conditional admission into Minnesota public and private colleges to Minnesota public high school students based on a student's academic performance through their junior year in high school. Direct Admissions Minnesota is a partnership project between K-12 and higher education, led by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

This report fulfills the legislative reporting mandate included in the legislation. By February 1, 2022, the Office of Higher Education shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education finance and policy, and higher education on activities occurring. The report must include but is not limited to information about the pilot program design, implementation challenges and recommendations, outcomes, and the feasibility of scaling the program to all public high schools. The full text of the legislation is included in Appendix A.

Background

Currently, significant disparities in educational attainment exist for Minnesota's Black, Indigenous, and communities of color. These disparities occur throughout the education pathway.

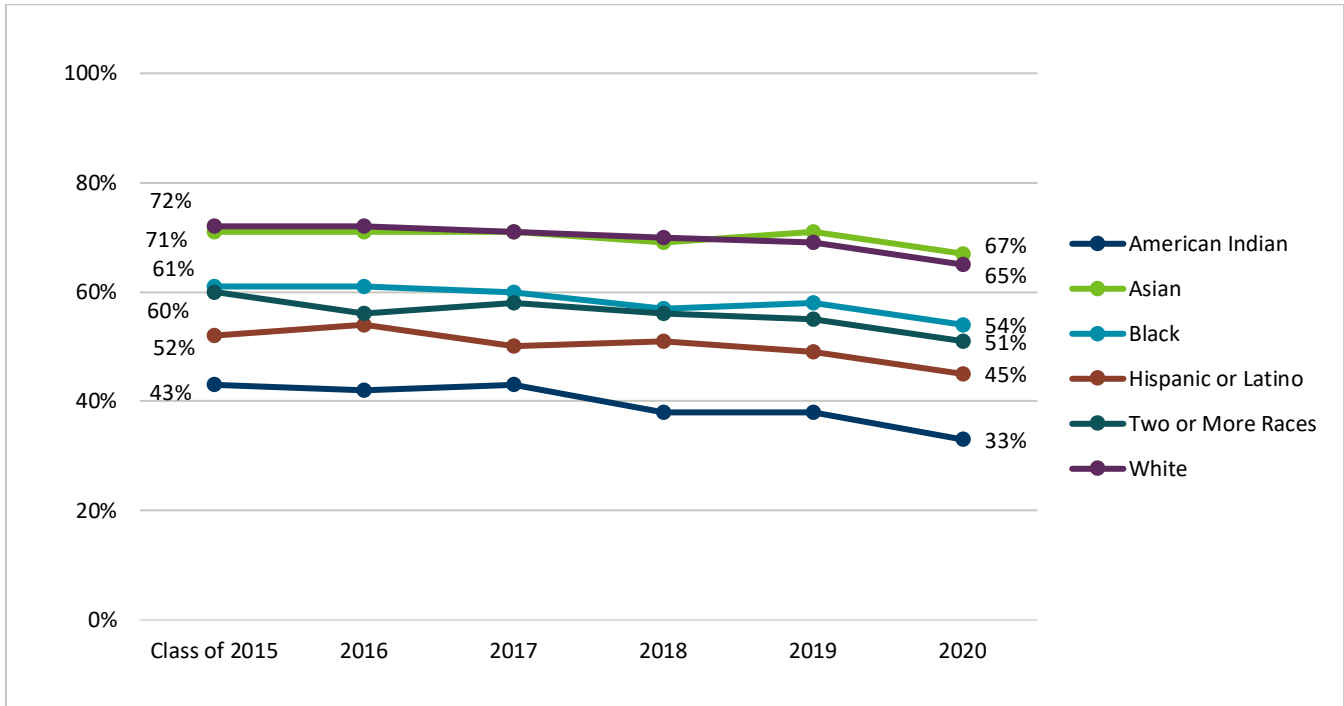
- Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial Minnesotans enroll in postsecondary education at lower rates than White and Asian Minnesotans as shown in Figure 1.
- Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial students also persist and graduate at lower rates as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

When these patterns combine and persist over time, overall educational attainment rates for a postsecondary certificate or higher degree for Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic/Latino Minnesotans aged 25-44 are significantly lower than that of White and Asian Minnesotans as shown in Figure 4.

- American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, and Black Minnesotans have attainment rates of 28.6%, 29.2%, and 38.2% respectively.
- White and Asian Minnesotans have overall attainment rates of 68.3% and 64.8% respectively.

Overall attainment rates by race and ethnicity also vary within populations of color. We also know the population of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color in Minnesota are projected to increase rapidly while the white population is declining steadily. These facts underscore the need to improve the ability of the state's higher education systems to serve Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color after high school by eliminating disparities. Without improvement, the economic vitality of the state will suffer.

Figure 1. College Enrollment Rates for Minnesota Public High School Graduates in the Immediate Fall after High School Graduation



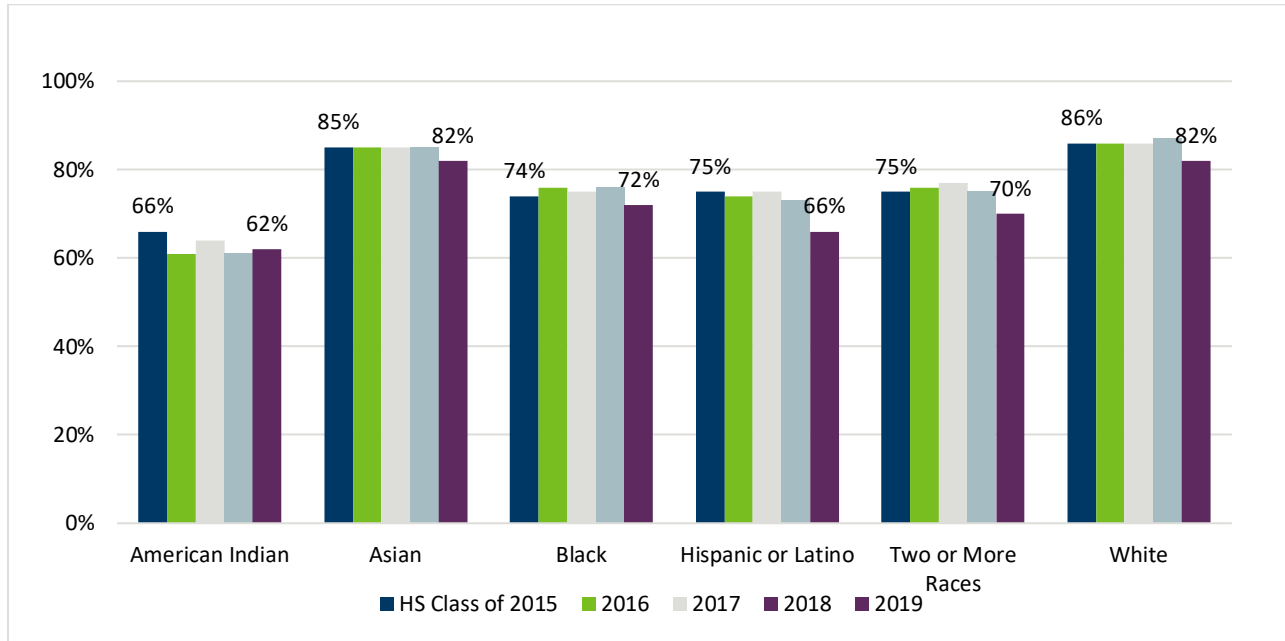
Source: Minnesota statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Table 1. College Enrollment Rates for Minnesota Public High School Graduates, Graduates Enrolled in College in the Immediate Fall after High School Graduation by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	Graduation Year 2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
American Indian	43%	42%	43%	38%	38%	33%
Asian	71%	71%	71%	69%	71%	67%
Black	61%	61%	60%	57%	58%	54%
Hispanic or Latino	52%	54%	50%	51%	49%	45%
Two or More Races	60%	56%	58%	56%	55%	51%
White	72%	72%	71%	70%	69%	65%

Source: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Figure 2. Year 1 to Year 2 College Persistence Rates for Minnesota High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity



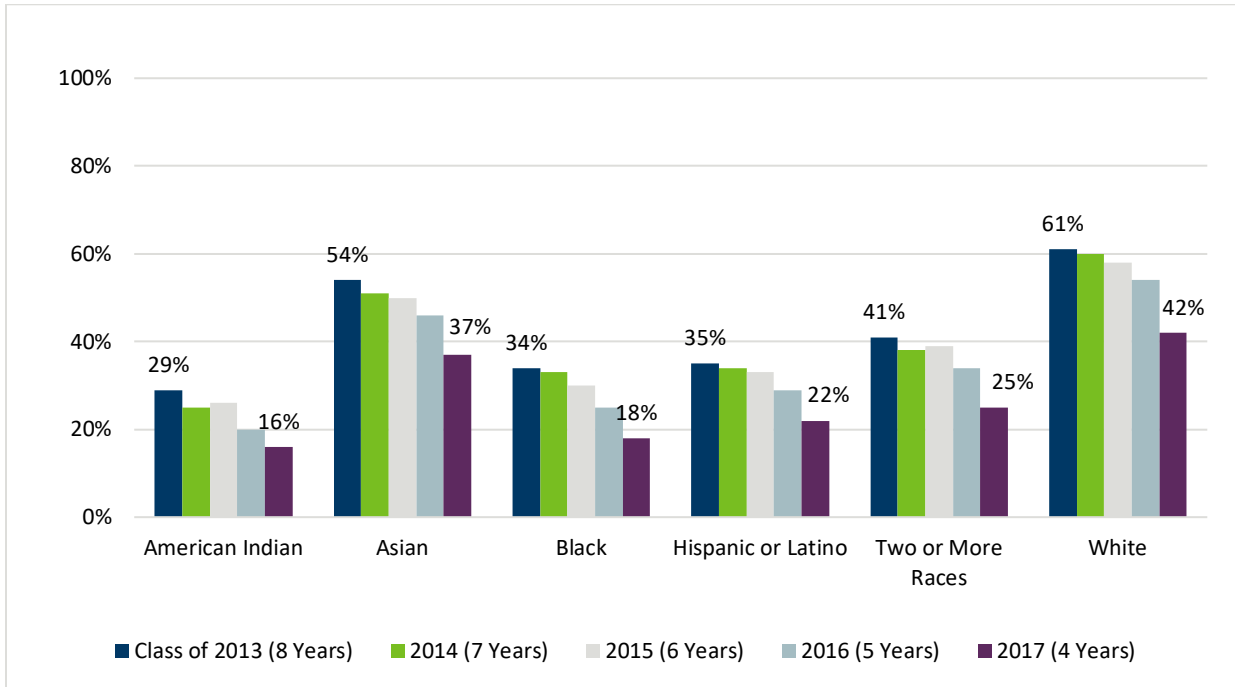
Source: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Table 2. Year 1 to Year 2 College Persistence Rates for Minnesota High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	Class of 2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
American Indian	66%	61%	64%	61%	62%
Asian	85%	85%	85%	85%	82%
Black	74%	76%	75%	76%	72%
Hispanic or Latino	75%	74%	75%	73%	66%
Two or More Races	75%	76%	77%	75%	70%
White	86%	86%	86%	87%	82%

Source: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Figure 3. Cumulative College Completion Rates for High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity



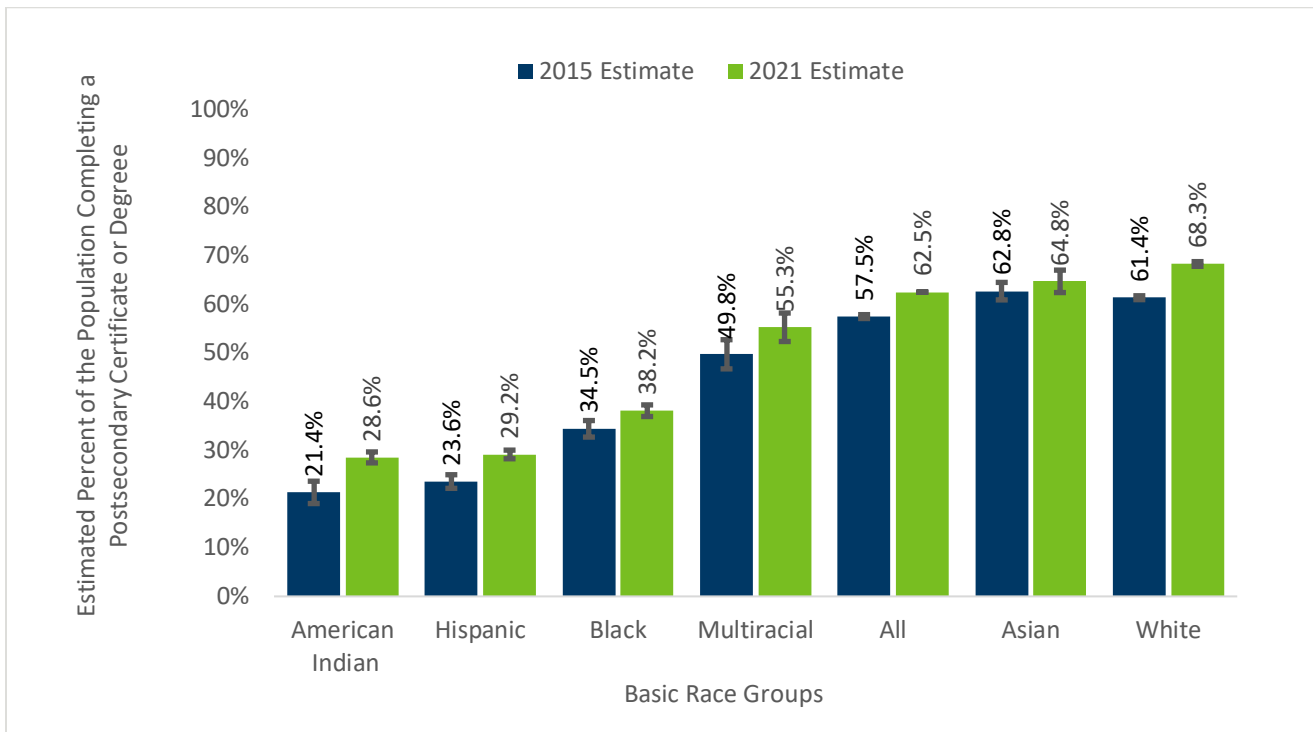
Source: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Table 3. Cumulative College Completion Rates for High School Graduates Enrolled in College by Year of High School Graduation and Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity	Class of 2013 (8 Years)	2014 (7 Years)	2015 (6 Years)	2016 (5 Years)	2017 (4 Years)
American Indian	29%	25%	26%	20%	16%
Asian	54%	51%	50%	46%	37%
Black	34%	33%	30%	25%	18%
Hispanic or Latino	35%	34%	33%	29%	22%
Two or More Races	41%	38%	39%	34%	25%
White	61%	60%	58%	54%	42%

Source: Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System, SLEDS

Figure 4. Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2021 Estimates by Basic Race Groups



Source: IPUMS Microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (survey years 2008-2012, 2015-2019), certificate data provided by the Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, with tabulations and analysis completed by the Minnesota Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest postsecondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded.

Direct Admissions Program

Direct Admissions Minnesota has great potential to reduce equity gaps by providing important college-going information to high school students, and eliminating the need for extensive college-going knowledge to navigate the college admissions process. A direct admissions system bypasses the typical college admissions process by proactively admitting students to college. Students receive letters indicating they have met the criteria for admissions to participating colleges and outlines the steps required for students to select their institution(s) using a common or universal application. All students in a state who are on-track for high school graduation are admitted to open-access institutions. Students who meet identified academic thresholds based on grade point average, test scores, courses taken, or a combination of these measures are admitted to selective participating institutions. Participating colleges would agree on academic benchmarks to determine a student’s eligibility for direct admissions as a group.

This pilot program aims to reduce self-selection bias and reduce equity gaps in college enrollment using four strategies:

- Promoting a college-going culture,

- Connecting students, families, and schools with colleges and universities earlier, giving families time to consider their options and plan,
- Easing the transition from high school to college, and
- Showing students that they have access to a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor’s degree if they choose to further their education.

Delaney, Canché, and Odle (2018) notes that “as a universal policy, direct admissions holds great potential to reduce equity gaps, provide important college-going signals to high school students, alleviate potential access gaps for rural and urban populations, and eliminate the need for extensive financial and cultural capital to navigate the college application process.”

Implementation in Other States

Direct Admissions was first implemented by Idaho in 2016. The program was successful in reversing declining postsecondary enrollments and reducing out-of-state migration. In addition to Idaho, South Dakota began proactive admissions for the high school class of 2018 (South Dakota Department of Education, 2019). In 2019, Illinois passed legislation to develop a pilot program for the 2020-2021 academic year to automatically admit high-performing Illinois high school graduates to targeted four-year public colleges.

Results for Idaho demonstrate that the program increases the number of students applying for and enrolling at both two-year and four-year colleges. Idaho reported

- 3.1% increase in overall college enrollment across two- and four-year institutions, and
- 6.7% increase in the number of high school graduates immediately enrolling in college (Kovacs, 2016).
- The 6.7% increase in enrollment encompassed a 7.7% increase at four-year institution and a 4.8% increase at two-year institutions (Kelly, 2018).

With completion of a new universal online application (Apply Idaho), the program noted an:

- 88% increase in applications completed (up by 12,937),
- 6.7% cumulative enrollment increase (compared to a national increase of 2.2 %), and
- 3-percentage-point decrease in students leaving Idaho for college (Howell et al., 2019).

Delaney et al. (2019) found that Idaho’s implementation of direct admissions was associated with a statistically significant increase in undergraduate enrollment of 11.02% at the institutional level, as well as institutional increases in in-state enrollment between 11.09 to 16.3%. Similarly, direct admissions was associated with a statistically-significant, statewide increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of 11.32%.

Implementation in Minnesota

The Office of Higher Education proposed implementing Direct Admissions Minnesota during the 2021-2022 academic year. The first group of seniors would see letters in fall of 2022. The first year of the project focused on establishing a pilot program with a limited number of high schools and districts to assess the work required for participating schools, funding requirements, and technology needs. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education

initially structured the project to begin in late summer 2021. With pandemic planning for schools and colleges taking precedent, implementation began in late October 2021.

Implementation Working Groups

The Office contacted stakeholders to ask for a representative for the planning and implementation work group for the program. Stakeholders from K12 schools, education organizations, student groups, colleges, and college preparation programs agreed to serve on the work group which began meeting in December 2021. Implementation work group partners include representatives from Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Private College Council, the OHE Student Advisory Council, Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota School Board Association, Minnesota Charter School Association, Minnesota Counselors Association, MN TRiO, local school districts, postsecondary institutions, and the Minnesota Legislature. A full list of representatives can be found in Appendix B. In follow-up to the implementation working group, OHE formed two additional working groups to focus specifically on work needed for K-12 and postsecondary education aspects of the program.

K-12 Working Group

The K-12 Working Group focus for implementation has included:

- Criteria for selecting pilot high schools and districts,
- Identification of the target student population,
- Academic benchmarks,
- Measures of success,
- Integration of this program with other college preparation and planning activities,
- Clear documentation of the work required for participating schools and districts, and
- Clear understanding of the college role for the program and after enrollment.

Postsecondary Working Group

The Postsecondary Working Group focus for implementation has included:

- Identification of the target student population,
- Process for establishing academic benchmarks,
- Integration of this program with admissions, and
- Clear documentation of the work required for participating colleges

Identifying Target Students and Schools for Direct Admissions

This program seeks to facilitate transition of high school students, particularly students of color, American Indian students, lower income students, and students with disabilities to a postsecondary program by creating a direct admissions pathway. Direct Admissions program goals include eliminating disparities in college admissions/enrollment resulting from college knowledge, parent educational attainment, and other factors. Therefore the program's target student population includes demographic groups with a lower than average college going rate, demographics diversity, academic diversity, and geographic diversity. The program's

participating high schools should include schools with a significant number of students of color, low-income students, and English language learners from across the state to achieve statewide representation. The working group will be using data from Minnesota’s Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) and the Minnesota Department of Education to determine the schools meeting these criteria. Once technology, administrative, and staffing needs have been fully articulated, schools meeting the criteria will be invited to participate.

Academic Measures

Selecting the academic measures to be used for the end of junior year review is a critical task for the implementation working group for four reasons. First, the academic measures must be reasonable and appropriate in order to encourage both high schools and colleges to participate. Secondly, the academic measures must leverage existing data. Thirdly, the academic measures must not introduce bias into the academic review process. Many stakeholders have concerns about over-reliance on test scores due to the inherent bias for BIPOC students. Finally, the academic measures must account for changes resulting from the pandemic. Students may have an increased number of pass/fail grades, have no reported test scores, and experience variations in grades due to remote learning.

Idaho uses a variety of measures for academic review. The data includes:

- SAT/ACT scores and listed activities
- Courses taken in grades 9-12
- Advanced Placement courses, exams, and scores
- Dual credit courses, and
- State accountability tests.

Technology Infrastructure

The Office of Higher Education identified two potential technology products needed to facilitate the program and ease the burden on K-12 and college staff. Using the state’s procurement process, MN.IT Services, on behalf of the Office of Higher Education, issued a Request for Information to student information system vendors to gather more accurate information on related costs, timelines, and resource needs.

The first product would interface with existing K12 student information systems to facilitate review of academic data based on the pre-set standards. The product would then generate the standard notification of results to students, parents, and K12 staff. This product is required as the Minnesota Department of Education does not collect the information needed to complete the academic review. Building in this functionality into existing K12 student information systems would minimize the need for data sharing, allows the program to leverage existing K12 communications, but may increase the work required of participating schools as compared to schools in states using a centralized technology solution for all students.

The second product would be a web portal for program management and may be optional. The Web portal would serve as the main hub for the student to select colleges they would like to be admitted and link to the application based on the results generated from product 1 and to view additional information about the college admissions process. The web portal could also serve as a central point for colleges to monitor activity. The Office

of Higher Education would also be able to monitor program activity to ensure fidelity of implementation and troubleshoot participation at a student or school level.

Measures of Success

Measures of success for Direct Admissions occur within two areas: implementation and student outcomes. The Office of Higher Education would measure success in implementation of the program using the following milestones:

- Participation by 50 or more Minnesota colleges,
- 12 or more high schools agree to participate (1200+ high school seniors),
- Academic benchmarks are agreed to by all colleges and understood by participating high schools,
- Work required of participating high schools and colleges is reasonable,
- First letters go to students in October 2022.

To facilitate a program evaluation in advance of scaling the program statewide, a review of student outcomes would be done. The success of the Direct Admissions Minnesota pilot program for students could be measured by:

- Immediate college enrollment rate of seniors, and
- Colleges chosen for application and enrollment.

Student outcomes would be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, free and reduced price meals eligibility, English language learner status, primary disability, school and district, and geography. In addition, FAFSA completion rates would also be measured to understand how this program impacts the state's FAFSA completion goal.

Challenges and Recommendations

At this time during program implementation, the Office of Higher Education cannot fully assess the program's challenges, nor make recommendations. The implementation working group has focused on two immediate challenges – ensuring that the work required of high schools is not overly burdensome on counselors or administrative staff, and ensuring that the academic benchmarks chosen can achieve consensus among colleges without overly complicating the process. As of February 1, 2022, the Office of Higher Education cannot make a determination on the feasibility of scaling Direct Admissions to all of Minnesota's public high schools. The Office expects that this assessment can be made during the May-July 2022 time frame with a final recommendation available post-program launch in late fall of 2022.

Next Report

The next report for Direct Admissions Minnesota will be issued February 1, 2023.

References

- Delaney, J., González Canché, M., and Odle, T. (2018). *Direct Admissions, Investigating a low cost promising policy innovation to increase college access & equity*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, The Forum on the Future of Public Education. Retrieved January 4, 2022 from https://forum.illinois.edu/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/2019conference_direct-admissions-full-report.pdf?sfvrsn=81efff96_2
- Gewertz, C. (2017). Good common-core test scores get you accepted to college in this state. *Education Week* (September 19). Retrieved January 11, 2022 from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/2017/09/south_dakota_guarantee_college_admission_for_good_smarter_balanced_scores.html?cmp=eml-enl-eunews3&M=58203372&U=1687885.
- Howell, C., Mehl, A., Pennington, J., Pontius, J., & Kock, S. (2019). *Using SLDS data to support college admissions*. Boise, ID: Idaho State Board of Education. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from https://boardofed.idaho.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/Webinar_Using_Data_to_Support_College_Admissions.pdf.
- Kelly, D. (2018). *Expanding college admissions to all Idaho seniors*. Presentation at the American College Application Convening. Iowa City, IA: American College Application Campaign & ACT Center for Equity in Learning. Retrieved January 11, 2022 from <https://www.acenet.edu/newsroom/Documents/Expanding%20College%20Admissions%20to%20All%20Idaho%20Seniors%20-%20Dana%20Kelly.pdf>.
- Kovacs, K. (2016). An admissions experiment succeeds. *Inside Higher Ed* (November 23). Retrieved January 4, 2022 from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/11/23/idaho-universities-see-enrollment-rise-after-killing-admissions-application>.
- South Dakota Department of Education. (2019). *Proactive admissions*. Pierre, SD: Author. Retrieved January 18, 2022 from <https://sdmylife.com/prepping-for-college/proactive-admissions>.

Appendix A: Legislation for Direct Admissions Minnesota

Minnesota Session Laws - 2021, 1st Special Session

CHAPTER 2--H.F.No. 7

ARTICLE 1. APPROPRIATIONS

Sec. 2 Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Subd. 39 Direct Admissions	2022 - \$925,000	2023 - \$75,000
----------------------------	------------------	-----------------

ARTICLE 2. HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISIONS

Sec. 42. DIRECT ADMISSIONS PILOT PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. Authorization. The commissioner of the Office of Higher Education shall develop a pilot program in consultation with stakeholders including Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the University of Minnesota, the Student Advisory Council under Minnesota Statutes, section 136A.031, Minnesota Department of Education, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Minnesota School Board Association to automatically offer conditional admission into Minnesota public colleges and universities to Minnesota public high school seniors based on a student's high school grade point average, high school and college transcript information, standardized tests, statewide assessments, and other measures as determined by stakeholders.

Subd. 2. Pilot design and goals. The pilot program shall establish and, to the extent feasible, implement a process for leveraging existing kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education student information systems to automate the admissions process for students. The pilot program will specifically evaluate the impact this process has on outcomes for students with lower levels of college knowledge, low-income students, and students from populations underserved in higher education. Initial pilot program participants must include high schools with a significant number of students of color, low-income students, or both, and must achieve statewide representation.

Subd. 3. Evaluation and report. By February 1, 2022, the Office of Higher Education shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education finance and policy and higher education on activities occurring under this section. The report must include but is not limited to information about the pilot program design, implementation challenges and recommendations, outcomes, and the feasibility of scaling the program to all public high schools.

Appendix B:

Direct Admissions Implementation Working Group

Organization	Name
Augsburg University	Robert Gould
Bethany Lutheran	Jeff Lemke
College of Saint Benedict & Saint John's University	Nathan Dehne
Concordia University	Leah Martin
Interim Executive Director of the Office of Admissions, University of Minnesota Twin Cities	Keri Zweig Ristic
Inver Hills Community College	Aaron Salasek
LeadMN	Axel Kylander
LeadMN	Matt Gutsch
Minnesota Department of Education	Paula Palmer
Minnesota Department of Education	Sally Reynolds
Minneapolis College	Genna Anderson
Minneapolis Public Schools	Derek Francis
Minneapolis Public Schools	James Bierma
Minneapolis Public Schools	Jeremiah Harris
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Burnsville School District	Dave Helke
Minnesota Counselors Association	Becky Mendoza
Minnesota House	Rep Davnie
Minnesota Private Colleges	Alison Groebner
Minnesota Private Colleges	John Manning
Minnesota School Board Association	Tiffany Gustin
Minnesota Senate	Senator Greg Clausen
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Office	Chris Halling
Minnesota State University Moorhead	Tom Reburn
Minnesota West Community and Technical College	Rebecca Weber
MN TRiO	Kim Hildahl
MN TRiO	Michael Bro
Normandale Community College	Nancy Pates

Organization	Name
North Hennepin Community College	Michael Bro
Office of Higher Education, Research	Meredith Fergus
Office of Higher Education, Commissioner's Office	Wendy Robinson
Office of Higher Education, Get Ready	Patrick Milton
Office of Higher Education, Outreach	Kat Klima
Students United	Emma Zellmer
Students United	Thomas Anderson



OFFICE OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

2022