

February 3, 2023

The Honorable Gene Pelowski Jr., Chair
Higher Education Finance and Policy
491 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Representative Pelowski:

Enclosed is the Direct Admissions Minnesota report for 2023 as required by Minnesota Laws 1st Special Session 2021, Chapter 2.

Pilot Program Implementation - 2023

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.

Participation: 46 high schools notified the Office of Higher Education of their desire to participate in Direct Admissions. In assessing work required, staff availability, and timing, seven high schools chose to delay participation until the 2023-2024 school year.

- Of those 46 high schools, 20 high schools were located in the seven county Twin Cities region comprised of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties; the remaining 26 high schools were located 21 non-metro counties.
- Among students enrolled in grade 12 at a participating high school in 2022-2023, 63% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region. In comparison, among students enrolled in grade 12 at any high school in 2021-2022, an estimated 58% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region.

The 39 participating high schools enroll an estimated 6,989 students.

- Almost half of enrolled seniors (47%) at participating schools are Black, Indigenous, and students of color. Almost a quarter of enrolled seniors (23%) at participating schools are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

As of January 27, 2023, 31 high schools reported 11,931 individual requests for Direct Admissions by 1,928 students or 30% of students enrolled.

- Of those requests, 58% were requests for admissions to a Minnesota State college (39%) or university (19%). The remaining 42% were to private non-profit colleges and universities (30%), the University of Minnesota (10%; Duluth, Crookston, or Morris), and tribal colleges (2%).

Academic Measures: Selecting the academic measures to be used for the end of junior year review was a critical task for the implementation working group. Based on the work of the postsecondary working group and a survey of postsecondary institutions, agreement was achieved to offer colleges the choice of six academic tier options based on cumulative high school grade point average and course grade average in English, math, and science courses taken in 10th and 11th grade.

Technology: The Office of Higher Education identified and implemented two technology products needed to facilitate the program and ease the burden on K-12 and college staff – software interfacing with existing K12

student information systems to facilitate review of academic data, and a web portal for the exchange of data between high schools, OHE, and colleges.

Challenges: The first year of program implementation saw an amazing amount of work and collaboration from OHE and the staff of participating high schools and colleges. Nevertheless, challenges occurred in four areas: administration, communications with students, technology, and fidelity of implementation. OHE has proposed program changes to student communication, staffing, and program set-up that will address these challenges moving forward.

Finally, it is possible to scale Direct Admissions to all 800 of Minnesota's public high schools. The Office of Higher Education recommends scaling the program over three to five years to all high schools due to the set-up work required, and maintaining it as a voluntary program for schools wishing to participate.

Feel free to contact me or the report authors if you have questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,



Dennis Olson
Commissioner

Enclosure

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Direct Admissions Report Pilot Program Year Two

February 1, 2023

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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 \$1807 to prepare, including staff time.

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Executive Summary

Every student is “college material.” This core belief drives the Office of Higher Education's new program called Direct Admissions Minnesota. This pilot program notifies graduating high school seniors from participating Minnesota high schools that there are multiple colleges and universities that are eager to admit them based on their academic records and their projected Spring 2023 graduation date. This program allows students to apply with confidence, knowing that the "will I get in?" question has already been answered with a "YES!"

The 2021 Minnesota Legislature funded Direct Admissions Minnesota which offers 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" may be referred to as conditional admissions or guaranteed admissions depending on the institution. 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 jump starts the typical college admissions process by proactively admitting students to college.

Altogether, the work of Direct Admissions is conducted by high schools, OHE, and the colleges in partnership. Direct Admissions, by streamlining admissions, does not limit student choices or minimize the importance of maintaining academic success in the senior year. As such, Direct Admissions materials communicate the following expectations:

- Students are expected to graduate in spring 2023,
- Students are expected to maintain their approximate academic performance level during their senior year,
- Students must complete admissions applications for colleges they are interested,
- Students should complete FAFSA for financial aid consideration, and
- Students are not required to apply to any of the colleges listed on their Direct Admissions letter nor are students limited to applying to just those colleges.

Participation: 46 high schools notified the Office of Higher Education of their desire to participate in Direct Admissions. In assessing work required, staff availability, and timing, seven high schools chose to delay participation until the 2023-2024 school year.

- Of those 46 high schools, 20 were located in the seven county Twin Cities region comprised of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties.
- Among students enrolled in grade 12 at a participating high school in 2022-2023, 63% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region. In comparison, among students enrolled in grade 12 at any high school in 2021-2022, an estimated 58% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region.

The 39 participating high schools enroll an estimated 6,989 students.

- Almost half of enrolled seniors (47%) at participating schools are Black, Indigenous, and students of color as shown in Table 2. Almost a quarter of enrolled seniors (23%) at participating schools are eligible for free and reduced-price meals as shown in Table 3.

As of January 27, 2023, 31 high schools reported 11,931 individual requests for Direct Admissions by 1,928 students or 30% of students enrolled as shown in Table 4.

- Of those requests, 58% were requests for admissions to a Minnesota State college (39%) or university (19%). The remaining 42% were to private non-profit colleges and universities (30%), the University of Minnesota (10%; Duluth, Crookston, or Morris), and tribal colleges (2%) as shown in Table 5.

Implementation

Stakeholders from high schools, education organizations, student groups, colleges, and college preparation programs agreed to serve on the work group which began meeting in December 2021. The Office of Higher Education issued a call to high schools to participate in Direct Admissions Minnesota in April 2022. For high schools, OHE assured high schools that there would be no cost to participate. OHE also offered additional funding to cover costs for high school staff time, transcript costs, high school technology changes, and related expenses. OHE also invited public and private non-profit colleges and universities to participate in Direct Admissions. Colleges were asked to waive all applications fees regardless of the date of application and choose a specific academic tier for which they would directly admit students.

Academic Measures

Selecting the academic measures to be used for the end of junior year review was a critical task for the implementation working group. The working group discussed possible academic measures for Direct Admissions including SAT and ACT scores, courses taken in grades 9-12, Advanced Placement courses and exam scores, completion of dual credit courses, and state accountability tests. SAT and ACT scores were eliminated from consideration given that all Minnesota colleges were test-optional for Fall 2023 admissions purposes. In order to gauge college preferences with regards to academic criteria for Direct Admissions, OHE surveyed 57 institutions. Based on the work of the postsecondary working group and review of the survey responses, an agreement was achieved to offer colleges the choice of six academic tier options for Direct Admissions. Participating colleges were required to “opt into” one of the academic tiers or groupings as shown in Table 8.

Technology

The Office of Higher Education identified and implemented two technology products needed to facilitate the program and ease the burden on K-12 and college staff. The first product interfaces with existing K12 student information systems to facilitate the review of academic data based on the pre-set academic criteria. The second product developed for the program was a web portal for program management. The web portal served as the main hub for the exchange of data between high schools, OHE, and colleges.

Measures of Success

The measures of success for Direct Admissions developed by the work groups have two broad themes: implementation and student outcomes. Success in student outcomes will not be able to be determined until fall 2023 when it will be possible to assess college enrollment patterns for participating graduates from pilot high schools. Success in implementation was achieved:

- College Participation: 51 colleges participated in 2022-2023
- High School Participation: 46 high schools sought to participate; 39 actually participated (7000 high school seniors)
- Students: 51% of students enrolled in 12th grade at a participating high school are eligible for free and reduced-price meals OR are Black, Indigenous, and students of color
- Academic Tiers: Academic tiers are agreed to by the 51 participating colleges
- Launch: First letters went out to Richfield High School students on September 26

Challenges

The first year of program implementation saw an amazing amount of work and collaboration from OHE and the staff of participating high schools and colleges. However, the year was not without its challenges. Challenges for the Direct Admissions program, as of January 2023, occurred in four areas: administration, communications with students, technology, and fidelity of implementation.

Administration

The greatest challenge in administering the program is K-12 staffing. Direct Admissions is not an expensive program to administer but its success relies on high school counselors and related staff finding additional 20-40 hours to set up the program at the local level. The second administrative task schools found challenging was sending transcripts due to the volume of transcript requests the process generated. The final administrative challenge occurring was staffing at the Office of Higher Education. Full implementation of the program to all Minnesota high schools (over 800) will require a full-time staff person at OHE to administer as the program requires significant oversight including contract management, coordination with technology vendors, and working directly with high schools to troubleshoot and problem solve.

Communication with Students

The success of Direct Admissions relies on successful communication with students and their parents. In this area, several challenges occurred. The first challenge to address in future years will be to improve the communication plan for high school students, specifically on what the program is and what the next steps are for the students. High school staff have requested that communications following the initial notification be standardized on a set timeline (e.g., prompts 3-5 days after sending the initial notification). On the college side of communications with the student, the largest challenge was student non-response. A majority of emails to students went unopened or unanswered, even though the college had been selected by the student for direct admissions. In addition, students were confused about how to take advantage of the fee waivers promised with

Direct Admissions. Some colleges required the student input a code on the application. Other colleges required no code and matched the student to information provided by the Office of Higher Education and waived fees automatically. Finally, high schools have requested that the admissions information be complimented with specific FAFSA and financial aid information.

Technology

The success of the program is dependent on high schools having implemented and being aware of information and processes within their local IT system to complete the academic review and send notifications to students. Without the ability to produce these reports, high school counselors must manually review the on-track for graduation status, likely in an Excel spreadsheet, and manually review the unweighted grade point average and course grades to assign tiers. A second, though anticipated, challenge is for the Office of Higher Education to onboard the remaining student information system vendors to Direct Admissions.

Fidelity of Implementation

The final area of program challenges involves fidelity of implementation. For Direct Admissions to be successful, it is critical that the program provide information to the student as soon as possible once the student begins their senior year. As not all schools were able to complete set-up tasks over the summer, seniors in the 2022-2023 academic year received their Direct Admissions notifications between September and February depending on the school. In addition, pandemic-related grading policies have resulted in cumulative grade point averages that cannot be used for college admissions. Specifically, the use of “No Pass, No Credit” and “Pass” grades in calculating the student’s unweighted cumulative grade point average (GPA) requires high school counselors to calculate a specific “Direct Admissions GPA”.

The challenges discussed in the prior section represent important lessons learned during a pilot period and are not insurmountable. With planning and assistance from K-12 and postsecondary partners, the Office of Higher Education anticipates evolving Direct Admissions into a more effective and successful program with each successive year. Recommendations to address these challenges include changes to communications, communication methods, administration, and technology.

- Standardize communications to students and communication timelines with regards to initial contact from colleges, prompts for follow-up at specified times sent by high school staff, and integrated follow-up messaging with FAFSA, Pell Grant, State Grant information.
- Increase the number of communication methods available to colleges to include personal email, cell phone/text messaging, and U.S. mail.
- Work with new schools earlier in the year to ensure adequate summer staffing for program set-up;
- Ensure that all schools use a staff-initiated electronic transcript process.
- Augment staffing of the program at the Office of Higher Education to be able to add schools more quickly.
- Work with schools to ensure full use of existing technology to support Direct Admissions and on-board additional vendors.

It is possible to scale Direct Admissions to all 800 of Minnesota’s public high schools. The Office of Higher Education recommends scaling the program over three to five years to all high schools due to the set-up work required, and maintaining it as a voluntary program for schools wishing to participate.

Introduction

Every student is “college material.” This core belief is the driving idea behind the Office of Higher Education's new program called Direct Admissions. This pilot program notifies graduating high school seniors from participating Minnesota high schools that there are multiple colleges and universities that are eager to admit them based on their academic records and their projected Spring 2023 graduation date. This program allows students to apply with confidence, knowing that the "will I get in?" question has already been answered with a "YES!"

The 2021 Minnesota Legislature funded Direct Admissions Minnesota, a new pilot program, offering 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" may be referred to as conditional admissions or guaranteed admissions depending on the institution. 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, 2023, 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.

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 enhances 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.

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.”¹

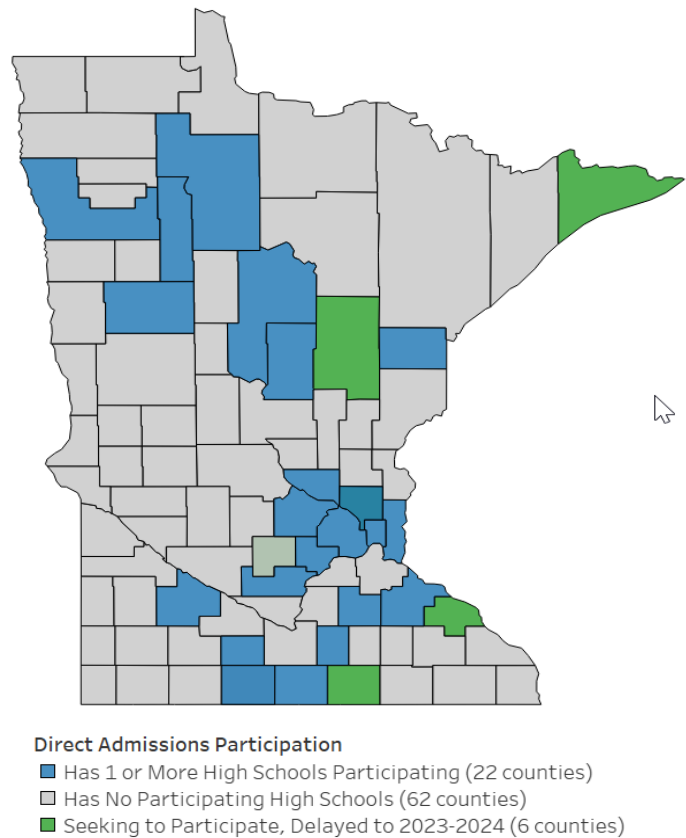
Participating High Schools – Geographic and Demographic Representation

Forty-six high schools notified the Office of Higher Education of their desire to participate in Direct Admissions as shown in Table 1. In assessing work required, staff availability, and timing, seven high schools chose to delay participation until the 2023-2024 school year. The 46 high schools represent 28 different counties as shown in in Figure 1. Of those 46 high schools, 20 high schools were located in the seven-county Twin Cities region comprised of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties. Among students enrolled in grade 12 at a participating high school in 2022-2023, 63% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region. In comparison, among students enrolled in grade 12 at any high school in 2021-2022, an estimated 58% of students attended a school in the Twin Cities region.

Student Demographics

The 39 participating high schools enroll an estimated 6,989 students. Almost half of enrolled seniors (47%) at participating schools are Black, Indigenous, and students of color as shown in Table 2. Almost a quarter of enrolled seniors (23%) at participating schools are eligible for free and reduced-price meals as shown in Table 3. This percentage is likely underreporting the

Figure 1. Participating Schools by County for Academic Year 2022-2023



¹ 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=81eff96_2

number of students whose families earn a lower income as fewer seniors enroll in free and reduced-price meals as compared to students in other grades.

Requests for Direct Admissions

As of January 27, 2023, 31 high schools reported 11,931 individual requests for Direct Admissions by 1,928 students or 30% of students enrolled as shown in Table 4.

Of those requests, 58% were requests for admissions to a Minnesota State college (39%) or university (19%). The remaining 42% were distributed to private non-profit colleges and universities (30%), the University of Minnesota (10%; Duluth, Crookston, or Morris), and tribal colleges (2%) as shown in Table 5.

Based on an academic review, students could be eligible for direct admissions to up to 51 colleges. Each participating college opted into one of six academic thresholds or tiers at which they would directly admit students. The process for establishing these academic tiers is described in the next section. Approximately half of students requesting direct admissions at one or more participating colleges were in Tier 6 (cumulative unweighted grade point average of 3.50 or higher and a C average in all math, English, and science courses taken in 10th and 11th grades) as shown in Table 6. The next largest group was students in Tier 1 (cumulative unweighted grade point average lower than 2.50).

The Office of Higher Education plans to report direct admissions requests by race, gender, and free and reduced-price meals eligibility. However, the Office is still awaiting the data needed to conduct that analysis.

Table 1. Participating Schools 2022-2023 Academic Year Sorted by County

County Name	School Name	Direct Admissions Status
Aitkin	Aitkin Secondary School	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Anoka	Fridley Senior High	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Anoka	Spring Lake Park Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Becker	Detroit Lakes Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Beltrami	TrekNorth High School	Participating 2022-2023
Carlton	Cloquet Senior	Participating 2022-2023
Carver	SWMetro ALC	Participating 2022-2023
Cass	Northland Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Clearwater	Clearbrook-Gonvick Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Cook	Cook County Senior High	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Crow Wing	Pequot Lakes Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Faribault	Blue Earth Area Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Freeborn	Albert Lea Senior High	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Goodhue	Cannon Falls Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Goodhue	Zumbrota-Mazeppa Senior High	Participating 2022-2023

County Name	School Name	Direct Admissions Status
Hennepin	Eden Prairie Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Henry High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Hopkins Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Jefferson Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Kennedy Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Richfield Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Rockford Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Roosevelt High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	St. Louis Park Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Venture Academy High School	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Washburn High	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Watershed High School	Participating 2022-2023
Hennepin	Wellstone International High	Participating 2022-2023
Martin	Martin County West Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Mcleod	Lester Prairie Secondary	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Polk	Fertile-Beltrami Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Ramsey	Highland Park Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Ramsey	Hmong College Prep Academy HS	Participating 2022-2023
Ramsey	Johnson Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Ramsey	Sejong Academy High School	Participating 2022-2023
Redwood	Red Rock Central Secondary	Participating 2022-2023
Rice	Faribault Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Sherburne	Spectrum High School	Participating 2022-2023
Sibley	GFW High School	Participating 2022-2023
Wabasha	Wabasha-Kellogg Secondary	Seeking to Participate, Delayed to 2023-2024
Waseca	Waseca Area Learning Center	Participating 2022-2023
Waseca	Waseca Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Washington	Lakes International Language Academy	Participating 2022-2023
Watonwan	St. James Middle/High School	Participating 2022-2023
Wright	Buffalo Senior High	Participating 2022-2023
Wright	Dassel-Cokato Senior High	Participating 2022-2023

**Table 2. Number of Enrolled Seniors at Direct Admissions
Participating High Schools by Race and Ethnicity, 2022-2023**

Race and Ethnicity	Count of Enrolled Seniors	Percent of Total Enrolled Seniors
Black or African American	998	14%
American Indian or Native American (Federal Definition)	99	1%
Asian	763	11%
Hispanic or Latino	1,047	15%
White	3,709	53%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	5	0%
Two or More Races	368	5%
Total	6,989	100%

Note: Count of enrolled seniors as of October 2022 was provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.

**Table 3. Number of Enrolled Seniors at Direct Admissions
Participating High Schools by Free and Reduced-Price Meals, 2022-2023**

Free and Reduced-Price Meals	Count of Enrolled Seniors	Percent of Total Enrolled Seniors
N	5,389	77%
Y	1,578	23%
Total	6,967	100%

Note: Count of enrolled seniors as of October 2022 was provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.

**Table 4. Number of Students Enrolled and Requesting Direct Admissions
for Fall 2023, as of January 27, 2023**

School Name	Unduplicated Count of Students Requesting Direct Admissions	Count of Enrolled Seniors	Percent of Enrolled Seniors Requesting Direct Admissions
Blue Earth Area Secondary	14	81	17%
Buffalo Senior High	137	449	31%
Cannon Falls Secondary	13	84	15%
Clearbrook-Gonvick Secondary	3	29	10%
Cloquet Senior	104	175	59%
Dassel-Cokato Senior High	30	89	34%
Detroit Lakes Senior High	38	203	19%
Eden Prairie Senior High	153	716	21%
Faribault Senior High	139	224	62%
Fertile-Beltrami Secondary	8	33	24%
GFW High School	has not reported	45	has not reported
Henry High	11	204	5%

School Name	Unduplicated Count of Students Requesting Direct Admissions	Count of Enrolled Seniors	Percent of Enrolled Seniors Requesting Direct Admissions
Highland Park Senior High	has not reported	291	has not reported
Hmong College Prep Academy HS	59	171	35%
Hopkins Senior High	120	507	24%
Jefferson Senior High	181	374	48%
Johnson Senior High	22	255	9%
Kennedy Senior High	46	343	13%
Lakes International Language Academy	has not reported	46	has not reported
Northland Secondary	has not reported	26	has not reported
Pequot Lakes Senior High	18	148	12%
Red Rock Central Secondary ¹	19	32	59%
Richfield Senior High	113	311	36%
Rockford Secondary	19	111	17%
Roosevelt High	103	189	54%
Sejong Academy Upper School	has not reported	20	has not reported
Spectrum High School	5	103	5%
Spring Lake Park Senior High	193	454	43%
St. James Middle/High School	has not reported	78	has not reported
St. Louis Park Senior High	65	375	17%
SW Metro ALC	2	42	5%
TrekNorth High School	20	29	69%
Venture Academy High School	30	50	60%
Waseca Senior High & Waseca Area Learning Center	43	197	22%
Washburn High	168	370	45%
Watershed High School	has not reported	13	has not reported
Wellstone International High	has not reported	36	has not reported
Zumbrota-Mazeppa Senior High	52	86	60%
Total	1,928	6,989	not applicable
Total - Schools Reporting	1,928	6,434	30%

Note: Count of enrolled seniors as of October 2022 was provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.

¹ Count of Enrolled Seniors is based on October 2021 Grade 11 Enrollment.

Table 5. Number of Students Requesting Direct Admissions by Sector

Sector	Count of Admissions Requests	Percent of Admissions Requests
Minnesota State 2-Year Colleges	4,625	39%
Minnesota State Universities	2,313	19%
University of Minnesota	1,235	10%
Private Colleges and Universities	3,568	30%
Tribal Colleges	190	2%
Total	11,931	100%

Table 6. Number of Students Requesting Direct Admissions by Academic Tier

Academic Tier	Unweighted Grade Point Average (4.0 scale; must include Pass/No Pass Grades)	Course Grades: Math, English, and Science Courses Taken in 10 th and 11 th Grades	Number of Colleges Selecting this Academic Tier	Unduplicated Count of Students Requesting Direct Admissions	Percent of Total Students Requesting Direct Admissions
1	Less than 2.50 GPA	No course grade requirements	28	244	13%
2	2.50-2.74	No course grade requirements	3	124	6%
3	2.75-2.99	No course grade requirements	3	54	3%
4	2.75-2.99	C average or higher in all 3 course subject areas	4	118	6%
5	3.00-4.00	No course grade requirements	10	462	24%
6	3.50-4.00	C average or higher in all 3 course subject areas	3	926	48%
All	n/a	n/a	51	1,928	100%

Implementation in Minnesota

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 precedence, 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, the 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.

The K-12 Working Group focus for implementation included the following tasks:

- Determining criteria for selecting pilot high schools and districts,
- Identifying the target student population,
- Identifying measures of success,
- Integrating the Direct Admissions program with other college preparation and planning activities, and
- Documenting the work required for participating schools and districts.

The Postsecondary Working Group focus for implementation included the following tasks:

- Identifying the target student population,
- Identifying measures of success,
- Selecting academic benchmarks,
- Integrating the Direct Admissions program with existing admissions processes and systems, and
- Documenting the work required for participating colleges.

Identifying Target Students and Schools for Direct Admissions

This program seeks to facilitate the 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 use data from Minnesota’s Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) and the Minnesota Department of Education to determine the schools meeting these criteria.

The Office of Higher Education issued a call to high schools to participate in Direct Admissions Minnesota in April 2022. The goal of Direct Admissions is to encourage all high school seniors to think of themselves as “college material” and to offer them a “direct admissions” opportunity. This pilot program sought to try to reduce the anxiety around the “Will I get in?” question and encourage exploration of Minnesota colleges and universities. Direct Admissions is designed to spark and supplement other college exploration activities offered by a high school and is not designed to tell students which college or university they should attend.

For high schools, OHE assured high schools that there would be no cost to participate. OHE also offered additional funding to cover costs for high school staff time, transcript costs, high school technology changes, and related expenses. Participating high schools were asked to complete six tasks:

1. Review end of junior year GPA and course grades to see if the student meets the admission criteria of the participating colleges and universities.
2. Notify high school seniors and their parents or guardians of their “acceptance” and encourage them to learn more about the programs offered throughout the participating colleges.
3. Prompt students to respond to the notification and choose the institutions to which they wish to directly be admitted. Students can choose one or more of Minnesota’s colleges or universities. Once selected, the specified colleges will reach out with admissions information, and request that students complete the application.
4. Collect the student responses and securely transfer that data to the Office of Higher Education.
5. Send each student’s transcript to each college they selected.
6. Collaborate with and provide feedback to OHE regarding implementation, student experience, and opportunities for process and program improvement.

OHE estimated that there was adequate funding for 40 high schools to participate and be reimbursed for costs during the 2022-2023 academic year. Per the legislation, the participating high schools should be geographically and demographically diverse. In the information sent to high schools, OHE noted that should more than 40 high schools be interested in participating, preference would be given to schools that are above 30% for free and reduced lunch participation and/or have 30% or more students who were Black, Indigenous, and persons of color.

Inviting Colleges to Participate in Direct Admissions

OHE also invited public and private non-profit colleges and universities to participate in Direct Admissions. In order to participate, institutions were required to complete six tasks:

1. Waive all applications fees regardless of the date of application.
2. Choose a specific academic tier for which they would directly admit students. Students were matched to the chosen academic tiers based on a review of their end of junior year GPA and average core course grades in 10th and 11th grade English, math, and science courses.
3. Receive data from the Office of Higher Education identifying the students choosing to be directly admitted to their institution.
4. Follow-up with the student in a timely manner with information regarding completion of the institution application. In order to minimize the amount of data each high school needs to share with the Office of Higher Education and the participating colleges, students were asked to complete the institution's application for admissions by published deadlines to secure their spot.
5. Work with the student and their high school counselor should unusual circumstances occur. Should a college have concerns regarding the admissibility of a Direct Admissions student, the Office of Higher Education would work with the college, the high school, and student to address unusual circumstances and challenges to the best of their ability.
6. Collaborate with and provide feedback to OHE regarding implementation, student experience, and opportunities for process and program improvement.

Colleges were not asked to admit the student into a specific academic program or to lower their academic standards.

Academic Measures

Selecting the academic measures used for the end of junior year review was 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.

Minnesota looked at the state of Idaho, which has been engaged in Direct Admissions work for several years for examples of the 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.

The working group discussed possible academic measures for Direct Admissions. SAT and ACT scores were eliminated from consideration given that all Minnesota colleges were test-optional for Fall 2023 admissions purposes. In order to gauge college preferences with regards to academic criteria for Direct Admissions, OHE

surveyed 57 institutions. This survey sought to provide OHE with preliminary feedback on academic criteria and potential participation in Direct Admissions.

Twenty-two colleges responded to the survey with 18 institutions indicating they would participate in Direct Admissions. Four colleges indicated that they would not participate citing one or more of the following reasons: the institution enrolls primary adult learners, the admissions office is short staffed, and the academic criteria planned deviates from the institution’s focus on holistic admissions. In addition, institutions indicated that they preferred the student complete the standard admissions application, and they desired that OHE use an unweighted grade point average. OHE also asked colleges to choose their desired minimum unweighted grade point average for Direct Admissions. The results from the survey are shown in Table 7.

Based on the work of the postsecondary working group and review of the survey responses, agreement was achieved to offer colleges the choice of six academic tier options for Direct Admissions. Participating colleges were required to “opt into” one of the academic tiers or groupings shown below in Table 8.

Table 7. Survey Responses for Unweighted Grade Point Average

Minimum Unweighted Grade Point Average	Number of Institutions Responding Affirmatively	Additional Requirements Desired by Colleges
None	5	None
2.50	1	None
2.75	4	None
3.00	7	Course grades in Math and English courses
3.25	1	College entrance exams (SAT, ACT) Participation in dual credit (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSEO, Concurrent Enrollment)
3.50	3	Course grades in Math, English, and Science courses A well written essay
No Response	2	None

Table 8. Direct Admissions Academic Tiers

Academic Tier	Unweighted Grade Point Average (4.0 scale; must include Pass/No Pass Grades)	Course Grades: Math, English, and Science Courses Taken in 10 th and 11 th Grades	Estimated Percent of Minnesota Students Enrolled in Grade 12 ¹	Number of Colleges Selecting this Academic Tier
1	Less than 2.50 GPA	No course grade requirements	30%	28
2	2.50-2.74	No course grade requirements	8%	3
3	2.75-2.99	No course grade requirements	4%	3
4	2.75-2.99	C average or higher in all 3 course subject areas	4%	4
5	3.00-4.00	No course grade requirements	26%	10
6	3.50-4.00	C average or higher in all 3 course subject areas	27%	3

¹ Source: SLEDS, Minnesota Common Course Catalog data for students enrolled in grade 12 in 2018-2019 academic year.

K-12 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. The first product would interface with existing K12 student information systems to facilitate the review of academic data based on the pre-set academic criteria. 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 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. Many of the student information systems allow for surveys to be sent to students which can be used to collect an individual student’s college choices for Direct Admissions and then create a data file for transfer to the Office of Higher Education.

As of May 2022, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) lists six approved student information system vendors that are compliant with the requirements of Ed-Fi. Ed-Fi data submission involves syncing disaggregated student level data from a district or charter's Student Information System (SIS) directly to MDE's Ed-Fi servers. The steps to complete this process are unique to each SIS vendor. SIS vendors provide specific set-up guidance to their districts and charters on syncing data and must be approved by MDE. The six vendors include: Infinite Campus, JMC, Power School , Skyward, Skyward Qmlativ, and Synergy.

OHE contacted the six SIS vendors and discussed compatibility of their SIS system and the school needs for Direct Admissions. Among participating schools, Infinite Campus is the most common vendor (29 of 46 schools)

as shown in Table 9. Infinite Campus was the only vendor to take early active interest in the project. Other vendors expressed concern that the timeline for Direct Admissions technology development overlapped with MDE’s summer 2022 deadlines for their systems to be fully Ed-Fi compliant. One vendor was non-responsive. OHE staff provided the technical specifications required for the project and Infinite Campus identified existing functionality within their system to meet the requirements as well as functionality that would need to be developed. The technology developed by Infinite Campus was integrated into their software platform and made available to all of their contracted high schools, not just those participating in Direct Admissions.

Table 9. Number of High Schools in Direct Admissions by Student Information System

Student Information System	Number of Direct Admissions High Schools
Infinite Campus	29
JMC	3
Power School	5
Skyward	1
Synergy	8
Total	46

OHE also worked with school and district staff which did not have Infinite Campus to identify similar functionality within their local student information system. Schools were given the option of completing the academic review of students using an Infinite Campus report, calculating results using excel, or by manual review. Notifications to students were also distributed via Infinite Campus survey, which also collected their responses. Schools were also given the option of notifying students by mailed letter, student email, or Google Sheets survey template created by OHE. Responses were collected manually by school staff opting for a mailed letter or direct-to-student email. The Google Sheets survey also collected student survey responses and downloaded them into a file for counselor review. Data files were created as part of the Infinite Campus software. For non-Infinite Campus schools, OHE provided templates and instructions for creating the data file. All schools were provided instructions by OHE for uploading their student responses via secure web portal to OHE.

The second product developed for the program was a web portal for program management. The web portal served as the main hub for the exchange of data between high schools, OHE, and colleges. MN.IT staff at OHE built the secure data transfer web portal. The Office of Higher Education monitored program activity via the data uploads to ensure fidelity of implementation and troubleshoot participation at a student or school level.

The Direct Admissions Process

Altogether, the work of Direct Admissions is conducted by high schools, OHE, and the colleges via six critical steps described below.

1. High school counselors review end of junior year GPA and course grades to assign the student to one of the six admission tiers.
2. High schools notify students and their parents or guardians by formal letter, email, and/or portal notification of their “acceptance” for Direct Admissions.

3. Students respond to the notification and choose the institutions they wish to directly be admitted to as a next step in the admissions process. Responses are collected by the high school.
4. High schools transmit that data to OHE.
5. OHE transmits the data and the student's end of junior year transcript to colleges.
6. Colleges contact the student asking them to complete the application and inform them of next steps.

Expectations of Students

Direct Admissions, by streamlining admissions, does not undermine the seriousness by which students should conduct themselves during senior year. As such, Direct Admissions materials communicate to students the following expectations:

- Students are expected to graduate in spring 2023,
- Students are expected to maintain their approximate academic performance level during their senior year,
- Students must complete admissions application for colleges they are interested,
- Students should complete FAFSA for financial aid consideration, and
- Students are not required to apply to any of the colleges that are listed on their Direct Admissions letter nor are students limited to applying to just those colleges.

Measures of Success

The measures of success for Direct Admissions developed by the work groups occurred within two areas: implementation and student outcomes. Success in implementation of the program would be achieved when the milestones shown in Table 10 were met. The Direct Admissions program met all of its participation goals for the 2022-2023 academic year in terms of colleges participating, high schools participating, geographic distribution of schools and students, and demographics of students enrolled at participating schools. The Office of Higher Education is surveying both high school and college staff participating in the program to determine if the program met its implementation goals in the areas of academic thresholds, the reasonableness of work required, and program launch timing.

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 program for students will be measured by:

- Increases in the high school completion rate of seniors (indirect outcome),
- Increases in the immediate college enrollment rate of seniors,
- Increases in the immediate in-state college enrollment rate of seniors,
- Increases in admissions activity between October 2022-July 2023,
- Increases in the FAFSA Completion rate (indirect outcome),
- Satisfaction with administrative processes by students, parents, high school staff, and college staff, and
- Fidelity of implementation.

College enrollment data will be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, gender, free and reduced-price meals eligibility, English language learner status, school and district, and geography. In addition, FAFSA completion rates and high school completion rates would also be analyzed to understand how this program may indirectly impact those two metrics given the close ties college preparation has with both of those outcomes.

Table 10. Milestones of Successful Implementation and Results for 2022-2023

Milestone	Success Threshold	Results
College Participation	Participation by 50 or more Minnesota colleges	51 colleges participated in 2022-2023
High School Participation	12 or more high schools agree to participate (1200+ high school seniors)	46 high schools sought to participate; 39 actually participated
High School Participation	Geographic distribution achieved	Participating high schools represented 28 counties 63% of students at participating high schools were from the Twin Cities region as compared to 58% of all students
High School Participation	More than 30% of students enrolled in 12 th grade at a participating high school are: 1) Eligible for free and reduced-price meals, OR 2) Are students from historically underserved populations	51% of students enrolled in 12 th grade at a participating high school are eligible for free and reduced-price meals OR are Black, Indigenous, and students of color
Academic Tiers	Academic tiers are agreed to by all colleges and understood by participating high schools	Tiers agreed to by colleges opting in; College survey data to follow in Spring 2023
Academic Tiers	Academic tiers understood by participating high schools	Academic tier results correct (only 1 student error reported to OHE as of 1/27/2023); High School survey data to follow in Spring 2023
Work Required	Work required of participating high schools and colleges is reasonable	Survey data to follow in Spring 2023
Launch date	First letters go to students in October 2022	First letters went out to Richfield High School students on September 26

Challenges and Recommendations

The first year of program implementation came together with an amazing amount of work from the staff of participating high schools and colleges. The year was not without its challenges. Challenges for the Direct Admissions program, as of January 2023 occurred in four areas: administration, communications with students, technology, and fidelity of implementation.

Administration

The greatest challenge in administering the program is K-12 staffing. Direct Admissions is not an expensive program to administer but its success relies on high school counselors and related staff finding additional 20-40 hours to set up the program at the local level. Implementation of Direct Admissions requires that high schools complete their assessment of students' on-track for graduation status, and the assignment of each student to an academic tier between June and August. In addition, staff test the software modules for notifying students and customize communications to students and parents, and ensure FERPA notifications are sent. Given that most staff are contracted through June 30, and then do not return until August, this adds work to the end of year or the beginning of the school year. For schools with limited staffing, finding the extra 20-40 hours needed was problematic. Schools have the option of contracting for work in July but not all staff are available. Funding provided by the state was utilized for reimbursing schools for the extra hours required. Once a school has completed its first year in the program, the need for staff time is reduced as set-up tasks only need to be completed in year one. However, hours are still required each June to August to complete their assessment of students' on-track for graduation status, and the assignment of each student to an academic tier.

The second administrative task that schools found challenging was sending transcripts. As Direct Admissions encourages students to select a college, staff are asked to automatically send the student's transcript to the college selected. Given that the fall period is early in the admissions cycle, students generally select more than one college. Some students selected all colleges available. These student selections resulted in staff being asked to send a large number of academic transcripts in a very short time frame. For schools where transcript requests were initiated by staff and processed automatically through existing technology, the demand was manageable. However, for schools where transcript requests must be student-initiated or schools where the technology was not available, the demand was not manageable. The Office of Higher Education reimbursed schools for costs related to setting up electronic transcript subscriptions. Costs generally range from \$500-\$1000 per year.

The final administrative challenge occurring was staffing at the Office of Higher Education. The Direct Admissions program is simple in its design. However, the administrative time required to set up a joint powers agreements for reimbursement of costs and a data sharing agreement for each school, and ensure that all documents are signed in a timely manner was higher than anticipated. There was also significant amount of OHE staff time spent to develop communications, including letters, FAQ guides, and online information, as well as leading the implementation team and working groups. While this time will decrease as schools gain familiarity with the program, implementation of the program at the more than 800 high schools statewide would require a full-time staff person to administer.

Communications with Students

The success of Direct Admissions relies on successful communication with students and their parents. In this area, several challenges occurred. The first area would be to improve the communications with students sent by high school counselors and staff during the fall period. Students were confused about the need to complete the college's admissions application even though they were eligible to be directly admitted. In addition, high school staff have requested that communications following the initial notification be standardized on a set timeline (e.g. prompts three to five days after sending the initial notification).

On the college side of communications with the student, the largest challenge was student non-responsiveness. A majority of emails to students when unopened or unanswered even though the college had been selected by the student for direct admissions. In order to minimize the amount of data needing to be shared, colleges were only given the student's email addresses, and specifically most students provided their high school email address, not a personal email address. More contact information for each student (e.g. cell phone number, mailing address) would ensure that colleges had multiple ways to reach the student should the student not respond to email communication. In addition, students were confused about how to take advantage of the fee waivers promised with Direct Admissions. Some colleges required the student input a code on the application. Other colleges required no code and matched the student to information provided by the Office of Higher Education and waived fees automatically. Standardization of the fee waiver process or simply better information for high school counselors would resolved this issue.

Finally, high schools have requested that the admissions information be complemented with specific FAFSA and financial aid information. While the Office of Higher Education is a partner in FAFSA trainings and financial aid information provided by Minnesota Goes to College, no information was provided under the Direct Admissions branding. Including this information, may make the information provided more powerful as it would be directed towards a student who already has a relationship with the program.

Technology

Minnesota is the only current Direct Admissions state operating in 2022-2023 where information on the high school transcript is not collected by the state department of education. Minnesota's program utilizes the local student information system and data sharing agreements with high schools and districts to assess and share the data needed to operate Direct Admissions. The success of the program is dependent on high schools having implemented and being aware of information and processes within their local system to complete the academic review and send notifications to students. For example, a school must assess if the student is on-track for graduation. To complete this assessment, a school must have the academic planner set-up. The academic planner details the graduation requirements for the district, the courses that meet those requirements, and the student's course enrollments and grade information. Once set up, on-track for graduation is assessed via a report. The same is true for assignment to academic tiers for Direct Admissions. The system has a pre-programmed report that reviews the students cumulative unweighted grade point average and course grades in English, math, and science and assigns the academic tier. Both of these reports are then reviewed by counselors for accuracy. Without the ability to produce these reports, high school counselors must manually review the on-track for graduation status, likely in an Excel spreadsheet, and manually review the unweighted grade point

average and course grades to assign tiers. The manual review process increases the time needed for staff to set-up the program prior to the start of each academic year.

A second, though anticipated, challenge is for OHE to onboard the remaining student information system vendors to Direct Admissions. All systems generally include a report assessing on-track for graduation status. However, assignment to a Direct Admissions academic tier and the result report for counselors to review requires software modifications. While the majority of high schools contracted with Infinite Campus for this functionality, there are four other vendors to consider (JMC, Synergy, PowerSchool, and Skyward).

Fidelity of Implementation

The final area of program challenges involves fidelity of implementation. For Direct Admissions to be successful, it is critical that the program provide information to the student as soon as possible once the student begins their senior year. As not all schools were able to complete set-up tasks over the summer, seniors in the 2022-2023 academic year received their Direct Admissions notifications between September and February, depending on the school. A goal for future years would be to ensure that all notifications are sent to students and parents by October 31 at the latest to take full advantage of College Knowledge month (October) and to ensure students have the information prior to completing applications for admissions or participating in events planned by their school.

In addition, pandemic related grading policies have resulted in cumulative grade point averages that cannot be used for college admissions. Specifically, the use of “No Pass, No Credit” and “Pass” grades in calculating the student’s unweighted cumulative grade point average (GPA) requires high school counselors to calculate a specific “Direct Admissions GPA”. If high schools used a “No Pass, No Credit” grade in place of “F” and a “Pass” grade in place of “D” or “C” grades during the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and/or 2022-2023 academic years, the unweighted cumulative GPA would have been calculated by only using “A” and “B” letter grades. This would result in an unweighted GPA of 3.0 or higher for all students and not accurately reflect the student’s academic performance for college admissions purposes.

Recommendations

The challenges discussed in the prior section are not insurmountable and with planning and assistance from K-12 and postsecondary partners, OHE anticipates evolving Direct Admissions into a more effective and successful program with each successive year. Recommendations to address these challenges include changes to communications, communication methods, administration, and technology.

- Standardize communications to students and communication timelines with regards to initial contact from colleges, prompts for follow-up at specified times sent by high school staff, and integrated follow-up messaging with FAFSA, Pell Grant, State Grant information
- Increase the number of communications methods available to colleges to include personal email, cell phone/text messaging, and U.S. mail.
- Work with new schools earlier in the year to ensure adequate summer staffing for program set-up;
- Ensure that all schools use a staff-initiated electronic transcript process;

- Augment staffing of the program at the Office of Higher Education to be able to add schools more quickly
- Work with schools to ensure full use of existing technology to support Direct Admissions and on-board additional vendors

Scaling Direct Admissions Statewide

It is possible to scale Direct Admissions to all 800 of Minnesota's public high schools. The Office of Higher Education recommends scaling the program over three to five years to all high schools due to the set-up work required, and maintaining it as a voluntary program for schools to opt into.

Next Report

The next report on Direct Admissions Minnesota is due to the Legislature by February 1, 2024.

Appendix A. Direct Admissions Participating Colleges

**Table A1. Participating Colleges and Universities 2022-2023 Academic Year (Fall 2023 Admissions)
Sorted by Sector and Name**

Sector	Institution
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Alexandria Technical & Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Anoka Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Bemidji State University
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Central Lakes College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Century College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Dakota County Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Hennepin Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Inver Hills Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Lake Superior College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minneapolis College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota North College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota State College Southeast
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota State Community and Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota State University Moorhead
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota State University, Mankato
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Minnesota West Community & Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Normandale Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	North Hennepin Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Northland Community & Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Northwest Technical College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Pine Technical & Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Ridgewater College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Riverland Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Rochester Community and Technical
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Saint Paul College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	South Central College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Southwest Minnesota State University

Sector	Institution
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	St. Cloud State University
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	St. Cloud Technical & Community College
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	Winona State University
Private College	Augsburg University
Private College	Bethany Lutheran College
Private College	College of Saint Benedict
Private College	College of St. Scholastica, The
Private College	Concordia College
Private College	Concordia University St. Paul
Private College	Dunwoody College of Technology
Private College	Gustavus Adolphus College
Private College	Hamline University
Private College	Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Private College	Saint John's University
Private College	Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Private College	St. Catherine University
Private College	University of St. Thomas
Tribal College	Red Lake Nation College
Tribal College	White Earth Tribal & Community College
University of Minnesota	University of Minnesota Crookston
University of Minnesota	University of Minnesota Duluth
University of Minnesota	University of Minnesota Morris

Appendix B
Program Overview for Students

Direct Admissions Minnesota

Your higher education journey starts with direct admission.

The Direct Admissions pilot program is designed to make sure all high school students know that they have college options. Through Direct Admissions, students don't have to ask themselves that "will I get in?" question because everyone will get a personalized list of colleges and universities that are committed to admitting them.

This fall, you will receive communication indicating which participating colleges are ready to admit you based on their admissions criteria and your academic performance. This communication will outline your next steps so you can get more information and secure admission to the right school for you!

Our goal:

We want all Minnesota graduating seniors to know that you have multiple college options in the state! Whether you attend a four-year university, two-year community college, trade school or technical college, all students can take the next step and earn a credential that results in career success.



2022-23 Timeline:



EARLY OCTOBER 2022

Watch for your Direct Admissions communication: Keep an eye on your inbox! You will be notified of all colleges and universities to which you have met admissions criteria.



OCTOBER 2022

Explore your options: Determine which college or university is the best fit for you! Visit [MyHigherEd.mn.gov](https://myhighered.mn.gov) and use the college search tool to compare and contrast your choices according to college profiles, program options, institution size, tuition and much more. Schedule a visit to your top colleges, get a feel for the campus, and don't forget to reach out and ask questions!



OCTOBER 2022 TO SPRING 2023

Apply to your colleges of choice: Complete your FREE applications to the colleges and universities that you are interested in.



Complete FAFSA and explore financial aid options: Be sure to complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)! The FAFSA is the most important step that you can take to pay for college. Maximize your chances to receive grants, scholarships, and other financial aid. You can also connect with your school counselor to ensure you are on track for graduation and identify school scholarships and grants to apply for.



Make your final decision: It's time to commit to your next steps! After considering all your options, you should confirm your fall 2023 admission with your desired college.

Direct Admissions AT A GLANCE

"Direct Admissions" means a student has gained conditional or guaranteed admittance to a college or university, depending on the institution.

Students must complete the college's application (*fees waived*) and submit additional information to officially confirm their admittance to the colleges of their choice.

During the 2022-23 Direct Admissions pilot program, there are:

- 40 participating high schools
- 7,000+ participating seniors
- 50+ colleges: From technical, tribal, and community colleges to public and private universities, there are great schools from all over Minnesota participating in the Direct Admissions program.

Scan the QR
code for more
information:



Direct Admissions Minnesota



You are college ready. You have options.

**Apply
for free!**

Minnesota colleges and universities are ready to welcome you next fall. ✓

Don't worry about paying for applications. Application fees are FREE for students applying through the Direct Admissions program.

Paying for college

There are many options that can help you plan how to pay for college and minimize the overall costs of higher education.

Complete the FAFSA

We strongly encourage you to apply for financial aid through the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** which is used to determine eligibility for both federal and state financial aid programs. The federal Pell Grant and the Minnesota State Grant provide grants to more than 120,000 students each year. Half of all students who apply receive a Pell Grant or Minnesota State Grant. Grants are based on the cost of the college chosen, family size, and income.

Where do I start?

The federal **Student Aid website** (studentaid.gov) is a great place to start. You may also want to check out the financial aid section of each college or university you are interested in to find out more about their deadlines and application process for scholarships and other types of college funded aid.



How did I get selected for Direct Admissions?

Your high school chose to participate in the Direct Admission program, and you were included because your academic record showed that you are on track to graduate in spring 2023. Your transcript and contact information were shared through a data-sharing agreement between your high school and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

How did I get selected for the colleges and universities on my list?

Students are accepted to colleges and universities based on their current GPA and the courses they have completed by the end of their junior year. Colleges and universities participating in Direct Admissions pre-selected tiers of admissions criteria to determine which students they will offer direct admission to.

NEXT STEPS

Do I still need to take a placement/standardized test like ACT or SAT?

While many colleges and universities participating in the Direct Admissions program do not require students to submit ACT or SAT scores, students should still consult the website of their top choice institutions to find out more about their current testing recommendations. You may be asked to submit ACT or SAT scores if required by the institution.

Do I still need to complete an admissions application?

Yes! The Direct Admissions program lets you know your options for schools that are committed to admitting you, but you must complete an admissions application to secure a spot. Remember - your application fee will be waived!

What if I already applied to colleges or universities on my list? Will this affect my application?

No need to worry about any applications you may have already submitted! Your application will still be processed and there is no need to re-apply. Please note that if you've already submitted an application fee, it will not be refunded.

I don't see the name of a college that I'm interested in on this letter. Does that mean I can't be admitted there?

Some colleges and universities in Minnesota chose not to participate in the Direct Admissions pilot, so you may not see a college you are interested in on the list. If there are other colleges you are interested in, you'll want to apply through their standard admissions processes.

Appendix C. Example Notification to Students



Dear Name,

Congratulations! Based on a review of your high school transcript, you are on track to graduate high school in spring 2023 and are eligible to participate in the Minnesota [Direct Admissions](#)² program! As you begin planning for your future, we want to make sure you know that **you are college material** and have met the admissions criteria for many colleges and universities in Minnesota. If you opt to complete a FREE admissions application at any of the colleges or universities listed at the bottom of this letter, you will be guaranteed admission for Fall 2023!

The Direct Admissions program has taken the worry out of knowing where you stand. You can choose to apply to one or more of the schools listed on this letter and know that you'll be granted admissions. You can look into the other great higher education options in Minnesota if the college or university you are most interested in doesn't appear on this list (check out myhighered.mn.gov to learn more). You have a couple of **next steps**:

- Confirm your interest in one or more of the schools listed that you have been guaranteed admission or get more information from schools you want to learn more about. You can do this by selecting the "check/box/button". From there, each of the colleges or universities will follow up with you with more information.
- If you are ready to apply, check out the websites for the colleges you are most interested in to make sure you have all your application materials ready (some schools may require an essay, test scores, or other materials). Please note that you must still meet the application deadlines, even if you are applying through Direct Admissions.
- Get help paying for college! You can apply for financial aid by completing your [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) (check out our FAQ for more information on getting help with your FAFSA!)

² Please refer to webpage (<http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=2484>) and program FAQ for more information. Some restrictions may apply or additional information may be required for admission into specific majors or programs.

Based on your academic record, you qualify for direct admissions at the following colleges and universities. Please select "yes" if you are interested in any of the colleges or universities listed below:

Public and Tribal Two-Year Colleges

- Alexandria Technical & Community College
- Anoka Technical College
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College
- Central Lakes College
- Century College
- Dakota County Technical College
- Fond Du Lac Tribal & Community College
- Hennepin Technical College
- Inver Hills Community College
- Lake Superior College
- Minneapolis College
- Minnesota State College Southeast
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College
- Minnesota West Community & Technical College
- Normandale Community College
- North Hennepin Community College
- Northland Community & Technical College
- Pine Technical & Community College
- Red Lake Nation College
- Ridgewater College
- Riverland Community College
- Rochester Community and Technical College
- Saint Paul College
- South Central College
- White Earth Tribal & Community College

Public Four-Year Universities

- Bemidji State University
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Minnesota State University Moorhead
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- St. Cloud State University
- University of Minnesota, Crookston
- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- University of Minnesota, Morris
- Winona State University

Private Colleges and Universities

- Augsburg University
- Bethany Lutheran College
- College of Saint Benedict
- The College of St. Scholastica
- Concordia University St. Paul
- Concordia College
- Dunwoody College of Technology
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Hamline University
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design
- Saint John's University
- Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
- St. Catherine University
- University of St. Thomas

Your future is bright and on behalf of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, we congratulate you for being on the right track for college in the fall of 2023!

Sincerely,

Dennis W. Olson

Commissioner, Office of Higher Education

School Official Name

Title

Appendix D. Direct Admissions Implementation Working Group

Table D1. List of Working Group Members for the 2021-2022 Academic Year

Organization	Name
Augsburg University	Robert Gould
Bethany Lutheran	Jeff Lemke
College of Saint Benedict & Saint John's University	Nathan Dehne
Concordia University	Leah Martin
University of Minnesota Twin Cities	Keri Zweig Risic
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
North Hennepin Community College	Michael Bro
Office of Higher Education, Research	Meredith Fergus
Office of Higher Education, Commissioner's Office	Wendy Robinson

Organization	Name
Office of Higher Education, Get Ready	Patrick Milton
Office of Higher Education, Outreach	Kat Klima
Students United	Emma Zellmer
Students United	Thomas Anderson

Appendix E. 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
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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.



OFFICE OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

2023