

ADMISSIONS



March 2026

Postsecondary Admissions Redesign at the State and System Levels

A Landscape Typology Report

Mark Duffy

Introduction

As the postsecondary education landscape changes, it is critical that the field develop a common language through the creation of a typology that can be used to describe the admissions redesigns being adopted and the characteristics of each as the basis to better understand their impact.

College admissions in the United States is an extensive and complex process that has been described as a gauntlet.ⁱ While the process of college admissions varies for each applicant, students commonly need to identify colleges and universities that meet their aspirations and capacity, take any required standardized exams (e.g., SAT, ACT), complete complex applications by the established deadlines, pay application fees or request fee waivers, gather any required letters of recommendation, write admissions essays, apply for financial aid, and wait for institutions to notify them as to whether they have been admitted, and then select the institution they wish to attend. At the same time, many postsecondary institutions have been experiencing considerable decreases in enrollment, especially since the pandemic.ⁱⁱ Over the past few years, states, postsecondary systems, and policymakers have responded to these issues by developing new programs with the goal of increasing postsecondary access and institutional enrollment by simplifying the admissions process. These programs typically focus on student subpopulations who may not have considered attending college otherwise, including first-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color.

The speed with which these admissions redesigns have developed in state and postsecondary systems across the country has made it challenging for the field to document and analyze the scope of these reforms. Further, terms such as “direct,” “guaranteed,” and “automatic” admissions have been used interchangeably, without a shared set of definitions and characteristics for each.ⁱⁱⁱ

It is critical that the field develop a common language through the creation of an admissions redesign typology that can be used to describe the approaches being adopted and the characteristics of each as the basis to better understand their impact. To that end, we propose a typology of postsecondary admissions redesigns, so that policymakers and postsecondary systems administrators can make more informed decisions about the reforms they adopt based on the extant options in the field.¹

¹ All of the landscape data are current as of December 2025.

This typology includes admissions redesigns at the state or system levels intended to inform students about postsecondary opportunities in their home state and simplify the application process to two- or four-year postsecondary institutions. While we recognize that there are many institution-level admissions redesigns as well, they fall outside the scope of this typology.

When discussing efforts to *simplify* admissions processes at the state and system levels,² we are referring to strategies that eliminate steps in the application and decision-making process for students, recognizing that a simpler process for applicants may create more complexity for institutional administrators.

The typology is organized around four key components derived from the work of Taylor Odle and Jennifer Ann Delaney, who identified strategies that can alter college-going behaviors among students; these strategies include:

1. an **early guarantee** of college admission;
2. **Structural simplification** of the application;
3. **proactive information and nudging** at a critical decision point for students; and
4. modest financial support through **application fee waivers**.^{iv}



This is not the first typology that has been developed related to promoting college access and enrollment; however, previous papers have explored redesigns in a broad sense, and have become insufficient as the field has continued to establish new policies and practices designed to simplify the admissions process in ways that promote student access and enrollment. For example, Gándara developed a typology that categorized programs along two dimensions: barriers to college enrollment (e.g., inequalities of cultural and social capital and community resources, racism and segregation, and, limited financial resources) and program sponsors (e.g., nonprofit organizations, university-based or K-16 partnerships, state or federal governments, and K-12 schools).^v Perna and her colleagues similarly suggested that the most important student-level predictors of college enrollment are academic preparation and achievement, financial resources, knowledge and information about college, and family support, but did not provide a more detailed analysis of admissions redesigns as they currently exist.^{vi}

The typology discusses admissions redesigns based on the key components for changing college-going behaviors among students, and then explores admissions redesigns based on a set of common characteristics, while also providing an analysis of these redesigns from across states and systems.

² Admissions processes at the state level refers to policies/programs developed by the legislature or other statewide coordinating or governing body responsible for all of a state's colleges and universities, while system level refers to policies/programs that are specific to just one portion of a state's postsecondary sector, such as a state's community colleges or state universities.

Admissions Redesigns

In conducting a literature and landscape scan of postsecondary admissions redesigns at the state and postsecondary system levels, we have identified eight types of policies: *direct admissions*, *informed admissions*, *cascading admissions*, *invitational admissions*, *self-reported admissions*, *guaranteed admissions*, *dual admissions*, and *system admissions*. Some of these redesigns have already gained considerable attention in the field (i.e., direct admissions, guaranteed admissions), while others reflect more recent ways of thinking about admissions reform. Each of these redesigns are outlined in Figure 1, and arranged based on the number of *common* components they address across states and systems.


Each of these admissions redesigns will be discussed in the following pages in order, from those that address all or many of the key components to those that address just one component. In the case of invitational, guaranteed, dual, and system admissions, each only addresses one key component. Given that *proactive notification* is an especially critical component in that it signals to students that postsecondary options exist for them:

- **Invitational Admissions** is listed before guaranteed and dual admissions because without the proactive notification, students may not have awareness of the policy and the opportunities it provides.
- **System Admissions** is listed last as it does not include either proactive notification or early assured student's acceptance.



Figure 1.

An Admissions Redesign Typology

Redesign Type	Definition	Key Components
 Direct Admissions	High school students are proactively notified by a state postsecondary agency or system of their acceptance to at least one two- or four-year institution based on academic criteria (e.g., GPA) and can select the institution(s) of their choice by completing a simplified application without an application fee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early • Simplified application • Proactive notification • Application fee waived
 Informed Admissions	High school students are proactively notified by a state postsecondary agency or system that they will be admitted to at least one two- or four-year institution based on academic criteria (e.g., GPA), but are required to complete a traditional application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early • Proactive notification • Application fee waived
 Cascading Admissions	High school students applying to a four-year institution in a state postsecondary system who are not accepted are alternatively offered admission and encouraged to attend another institution(s) in the system based on academic criteria and areas of interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early • Application fee waived
 Self-Reported Admissions	High school students enter limited academic information (e.g., GPA) into an online questionnaire/ portal to determine acceptance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early • Simplified application
 Invitational Admissions	High school students are proactively notified by a state postsecondary agency or system of their eligibility for admission to a four-year institution based on academic criteria and encouraged to apply without a guarantee of admission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive notification
 Guaranteed Admissions	High school students are assured of admission to one or more four-year institution(s) if they apply and meet established academic criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early
 Dual Admissions	Students starting their postsecondary education at a two-year institution may also be conditionally admitted to a partnering four-year institution and provided with supports from both institutions to facilitate their successful transfer contingent on completing applicable requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission assured early
 System Admissions	High school students may apply to multiple institutions in the same postsecondary system with a single application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified application

Types of Admissions Redesigns

Building on Figure 1, this section will explore each type of admissions redesign, providing examples of each at the state or system level. The data used for these analysis are current as of December 2025; additional policy revisions may have been adopted after that point.



Direct Admissions:

Direct admissions programs include all of the key components identified by Odle and Delaney by *proactively notifying* students of their admission to a postsecondary institution *early*, only requiring students to *complete a simplified application*, and *waiving application fees*.^{vii} Six states or systems identified through this landscape scan are examples of this category:

- Through [Idaho Campus Choice](#), every high school graduating senior is ensured acceptance to a state-funded postsecondary institution (two-year, four-year, or both). Students proactively receive a letter notifying them of the institutions that have accepted them. Using the [Apply Idaho](#) website, participating students can then apply online for free to one or more of the Idaho Campus Choice institutions through a streamlined process.^{viii}
- Though [NC College Connect](#), North Carolina public high school seniors with a weighted GPA of 2.8 or above and who meet the general NC College Connect requirements are automatically admitted to select North Carolina colleges and universities. Eligible students log into the NC College Connect portal to see the list of institutions where they have been offered admission. Then, students complete an NC College Connect form, which includes contact and demographic information, to accept admission at each of the NC College Connect institutions of their choice. NC College Connect forms submitted through the NC College Connect portal are often free.
- In [South Dakota's Fast Track Admission](#) three year pilot program that began in 2024-25, students only need to activate their admission by selecting their school(s) of interest on the Fast Track Activation Form included with the notification letter. Participating universities are waiving application fees for students who have earned Fast Track Admission from the three school districts participating in the program.^{ix}

- The State University of New York (SUNY) has two programs through which eligible graduating high school seniors can be directly admitted to a postsecondary institution:
 - 1) Through the [Top 10% Promise](#)^x students in the top 10% of their high school class (who also meet other academic preparation requirements) are matched with one or more SUNY campus, without completing a traditional application. High schools send a letter to eligible students, including information on how they can opt into having their academic records sent to SUNY. High Schools will confirm student eligibility and provide a transcript. Once a student is confirmed eligible, SUNY notifies them as to which of the participating four-year campuses they have been admitted.^{xi}
 - 2) Through the [SUNY Community College Direct Admissions](#)^{xii} program, SUNY sends letters to graduating high school seniors who have not already applied and been accepted to a SUNY campus, confirming their admission to their local community college; to secure a spot students have to complete a simplified form.^{xiii}
- [TN Direct Admissions](#) is a pilot study for Tennessee high school graduates in the Class of 2026 offering automatic admission to participating Tennessee postsecondary institutions without requiring a traditional application or application fee. Seniors at randomly selected high schools will also receive information about grants and scholarships. Students will simply use the QR code on their letter to view their personalized list of institutions and claim a spot at the school they want to attend.
- Similarly, [Direct Admit Wisconsin](#) is an initiative by the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) to proactively offer admission to qualifying high school students between their junior and senior years. Students receive their Direct Admit offer of admission via email, hard copy letter, and/or their high school student portal. The letter is an official admission offer from UW and lists all the UW universities/ campuses to which the student has been admitted. The student is required to complete a free form indicating which UW university campus(es) they are interested in attending.^{xiv}





Informed Admissions

While direct and informed admissions programs are similar in several respects (admission assurance, proactive notification, and application fee waivers in at least some cases³), informed admissions programs still *require students to complete the traditional application* after notification. Multiple admissions redesigns were identified as matching this description:

- Through the California State University (CSU) [Direct Admissions Pilot](#), high school seniors in Riverside County – those on track to meet college preparatory course requirements with at least a 2.5 GPA – are informed that they are admissible to the CSU system and encouraged to apply. Students then populate their application(s) to their preferred CSU campuses(es) through the [CaliforniaColleges.edu](#) platform. The pilot with Riverside County started in fall 2024 with 10 of the 22 CSU campuses, but the program will expand to 16 CSU campuses and include high schools statewide.
- Through the [One Click College Admit](#) program in Illinois starting with the class of 2027, high school students who opt into the program will be proactively notified of admission to two- or four-year institutions, but are still required to complete a traditional application through the Common App. Applications fees are waived for all students, as well as essays and letters of recommendation.

- The [Direct Admissions Minnesota](#) program notifies graduating seniors of their state postsecondary options by sending a list of the participating state colleges and universities that have proactively admitted them, but students must complete an application for each of the colleges and universities they are interested in attending. Further, participating high schools notify families of their participation in the program and allow them to opt-out if they wish.^{xv}
- [The Washington Guaranteed Admissions Program \(WAGAP\)](#) offers students admission to participating universities if they meet the eligibility criteria, but an application to the institution of their choice is required. School districts or high schools need to agree to be a WAGAP partner and students must opt-in to share academic and directory information with participating universities.^{xvi}



Cascading Admissions

In the cascading admissions program identified, high school students who apply to a 4-year institution in a state postsecondary system are *offered admission* to alternative institution(s) in the system based on student academic criteria and are encouraged to attend. **SUNY Match** connects students who have applied but were not accepted to their top choice SUNY campus with admission at alternate SUNY campuses with degree programs in their major or program of study. Further, the application fee for any alternative SUNY campuses is waived as the initial application data is used to determine admission to the other campuses.^{xvii}

³ Some postsecondary institution will waive application fees during a particular time period (e.g., College Application Week) or if students can provide evidence of financial need



Self-Reported Admissions

Many states and systems have developed websites where students can enter just a few data points about their academic record from high school, such as GPA and class rank, and immediately see a list of colleges and universities in their home state where they are assured admission based on data they have provided. Students must be aware of the website and are not proactively notified on an individual basis about the opportunity, but the website allows students to determine which state institutions will accept them if they go on to complete the application process and enroll. For example:

- Through [Alabama Direct Admission](#), high school seniors can be admitted to participating in-state colleges and universities without a traditional application if they create a Match Profile and upload their academic transcript (with at least 3 years of grades). Institutions then review anonymous student profiles and make admission offers, which may include scholarship awards. The students select the offers of interest to receive admission materials.
- The [Connecticut Automatic Admissions Program \(CAAP\)](#) is a portal on the Common App managed by Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System (CSCU). Graduating high school seniors who submit their weighted or unweighted GPA into the program portal on the Common App and meet the GPA requirements (3.0 weighted and 2.75 unweighted) are eligible for admission to participating colleges and universities, but must complete the Common App for the institutions where they are deemed eligible. This program waives the application fee, student essays, and recommendation letters for participating institutions.^{xviii}

- Starting with the class of 2026, Hawai'iian students will be directed to [Direct2UH](#) to enter their name, Hawai'i Department of Education ID, birthdate, and GPA to find out where they are eligible for admission. Students' information will be matched with institutional admissions criteria, and they will be notified which UH campuses have accepted them. Students will then select their campus and major by completing a Direct2UH Campus Choice form by May 1; the program is only available for fall admissions.
- For the classes of 2025 and 2026, the Illinois [One Click College Admit](#) is available to high school students who 1) create a Common App profile, 2) input required information including their high school GPA and home address, and 3) meet identified academic thresholds (which vary by institution). Students who complete these steps receive an email with offers of admission and an invitation to complete the remaining steps through Common App. Once students submit their application, institutions verify the accuracy of the information using high school transcripts and other documentation and then provide a formal offer of admission.⁴

⁴ Starting with the class of 2027, students who complete an online opt-in form as high school juniors will have their contact information and GPA sent to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) by their high schools or community college. ISAC will then determine whether participating students meet the admissions criteria for each participating institution.

- Through the [My Texas Future](#) website, students can access their “direct admissions” program. Once students opt into the program and share their academic information (i.e., unweighted GPA, SAT or ACT scores, class rank, and graduation plans), they can view their acceptances and start the application process. The eligibility criteria vary by institution and students do not need to have all of their academic information to develop their profile, but they are encouraged to include as much information as possible and update their profile as new information becomes available.^{xix} After students receive the list of Texas universities that would accept them, they can complete the [Apply Texas](#) common application to verify their self-reported data and apply for a specific major.
- [Admit Utah](#) is a website sponsored by the Utah System of Higher Education that shows prospective students which state postsecondary institutions will ensure their admission. Students can answer a few questions about themselves (i.e., GPA, high school, name, email address), and the website will generate a list one or more of the 16 Utah public community colleges and universities where they are ensured admission, including programs with bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, and certificate programs; as a result, *every student* accessing the portal will be admitted to a state postsecondary institution. However, students are still required to submit additional “admission requirements” and their high school transcripts.^{xx} The University of Utah is not included in Admit Utah, but has developed its own admissions program called [Utah Direct](#).



Invitational Admissions

In invitational admissions programs, high school students are *proactively notified* by a state postsecondary agency or system that they are *eligible for admission* to a two-year or four-year institution based on academic criteria and are *encouraged to apply* without the state or system assuring admission. Two systems were identified as utilizing this approach:

- Through [GEORGIA MATCH](#), the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) notifies high school seniors of their eligibility for admission to many of the state’s public universities and technical colleges based on their high school calculated HOPE grade point average (GPA) through 11th grade.⁵ However, students still need to complete an application, submit their high school transcript, and submit test scores if required. Further, inclusion in the GEORGIA MATCH program represents only provisional acceptance and does not guarantee acceptance to a college or university. The University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, and Georgia College and State University are not participating in GEORGIA MATCH because they require a standardized test score and consider factors beyond students’ GPA for admissions.^{xxi}

⁵ The high school HOPE GPA calculation is used for the purpose of determining academic eligibility for HOPE Scholarship and Zell Miller Scholarship and is not the same as a high school GPA. Accredited Georgia public and private high schools electronically submit transcript data and academic rigor to GSFC for the calculation to determine students’ initial academic eligibility.

- Seniors attending participating high schools receive an introductory [Indiana Pre-Admissions Letter](#) that informs them of the initiative and prepares them to expect the official letter. The Indiana Pre-Admissions Official Letter is sent to both high school seniors and their parent/guardian. It notifies them of their *eligibility for admission* to participating institutions within the state. Students can then submit applications to their *pre-admitted* institutions for official admission. However, these institutions may have more conditions to secure admission.^{xxii}
- [Florida's Talented Twenty program](#), which guarantees admission to one of the 12 state universities for students who meet eligibility criteria based on data submitted by local school districts. To qualify for the Talented Twenty program, a student must 1) be enrolled in a Florida public high school and graduate with a standard diploma, 2) be ranked in the top 20 percent of their graduating class after the posting of seventh semester grades, and 3) submit SAT, ACT or CLT⁶ scores, along with other eligibility requirements outlined by the Board of Governors.^{xxv}



Guaranteed Admissions

Under guaranteed admissions programs, high school students are assured admission if they meet established academic criteria, but in most cases they must be aware of the policy without notification by the state or system and apply to the institution for admission. Examples of guaranteed admissions programs include.

- The [University of California's Statewide Guarantee](#) which uses the Statewide Index and Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) program to identify students in the top nine percent of California high school graduates and offers these students a guaranteed space at a UC campus, if space is available. The Statewide Index is based on the completion of college preparatory courses and GPA based on these courses. The ELC program identifies the top 9 percent of students in participating high schools based on their GPA in UC-approved coursework completed in the 10th and 11th grades.^{xxiv}
- Through the [Michigan Assured Admission Pact \(MAAP\)](#), participating public universities have committed to admitting all Michigan high school graduates who earned a cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale. However, the MAAP program applies only to students applying for admission to college for the first fall semester following their high school graduation.
- Under the [Texas Top 10% Rule](#), a student is eligible for admission to a Texas public college or university as an undergraduate student if the student earned a grade point average in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class and the applicant 1) successfully completed the requirements for the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP); 2) earned the distinguished level of achievement under the Foundation High School Program; or 3) satisfied ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks on the ACT assessment or earned on the SAT assessment a score of at least 1,500 out of 2,400.^{xxvi} The University of Texas at Austin automatically admits eligible Texas students in the top 6% of their high school graduating class.^{xxvii}

⁶ The CLT is a college entrance exam for 11th and 12th graders and an alternative to the SAT and ACT.



Dual Admissions

Through dual admissions policies that operate across entire systems or states, eligible students starting their postsecondary education at a two-year institution may also be conditionally admitted to a partnering four-year institution and provided with additional supports from both institutions to facilitate their successful transfer. Under such state or system policies, admission to the four-year institution is assured as long as certain requirements (e.g., credits earned, minimum grade point average) are met. This type of admissions redesign builds on the “2+2” transfer model often arranged between individual two- and four-year institutions that allow students to earn a bachelor’s degree by completing two years at a community college and then transferring to a four-year institution. This type of redesign should not be confused with *dual enrollment* programs in which high school students enroll in college level coursework while still in high school.

Examples of dual admissions policies at the state or system level include the following:

- Passed in 2021, [California’s AB 132](#) established a *dual admissions program* providing eligible first-time college applicants the opportunity for guaranteed admission to the UC or CSU campus of their choice following completion of a transfer pathway at a California community college. These programs provide participating students with a guarantee of future UC and CSU admission within three years of entering the program, contingent on successfully completing the requirements of the agreement. Further, participating students have access to both community college and university services, such as the library and academic counseling.^{xxviii}

- In **Indiana**, the dual admission program allows students to work toward their associate degree at [Ivy Tech Community College](#), the state’s community college system with campuses across Indiana, while they are *simultaneously enrolled* at one of two 4-year partner university campuses: Indiana University Southeast and Purdue University Northwest. Students must complete an associate’s degree and earn a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher in order to transfer.^{xxix}

DUAL ADMISSIONS SPOTLIGHT: Universal Admissions through the Arizona Attainment Alliance

While not a dual admissions program at the state or system level, every student who applies to **Northern Arizona University (NAU)** is either admitted to the university or alternately admitted through **Universal Admissions**, meaning that they will automatically be accepted to NAU as a transfer student from the Arizona community college of their choice once *they feel they are ready to transfer*. There is a single admissions application process across NAU and community colleges to lessen student burden and allow for multi-directional admission and transfer. The program is also working on automatic credit evaluation for transfer students.



System Admissions

Postsecondary systems in many states have also developed a single application that potential students can use to apply to multiple campuses within the system. Similar to the Common App, this redesign simplifies the application process and allows students to gain access more easily to a postsecondary education in their home state. In some cases, the application fee is waived. For example, both the [University of California](#) (UC) and [California State University](#) (CSU) systems allow students to apply to all of their campuses with a single application. [Apply Idaho](#) is a free, common application platform for up to 10 in-state colleges, but is only available to current-year graduating Idaho high school seniors. [Apply Montana](#) is an online application for undergraduate students seeking to enroll at any campus in the Montana University System. Finally, [Apply Texas](#) allows students to apply for admissions and transfer to any Texas public university or community college, and many private universities.



Analysis Across Admission Redesign Types

While admissions redesigns differ in many ways, there are a number of characteristics that are similar and worth further analysis including the scope of the programs, data sources, eligibility criteria, application fee waivers and opt-in requirements.

Scope of the Program

The scope of admissions redesigns vary by 1) the school districts or individual high schools included, 2) the types of postsecondary institutions included, and 3) whether participation in the program is simply up to individual students to determine. More specifically, different types of admissions redesigns fall into the following categories related to program scope:

- **Students in all public high schools are eligible:** Only a small portion of the states or systems with admissions redesigns include all students in public school districts and high schools, due at least in part because of the challenges related to gaining access to individual student high school achievement data.⁷ In states such as Idaho, Georgia, and North Carolina, the programs have access to individual student data through state longitudinal data systems or agencies, facilitating statewide participation.

- **Students in participating districts and high schools are eligible:** In other programs, districts or individual high schools have to decide to participate in the program and agree to share high school student data. For example, under the SUNY Top 10% Promise, high schools were invited to participate and must provide data for their students to be included. Similarly, high schools must indicate participation in Indiana Pre-Admissions and then upload student data (preliminary GPAs) for students in *ScholarTrack*. Direct Admissions Minnesota notifies graduating seniors from participating Minnesota high schools that have signed on to participate. South Dakota, Tennessee, and California are piloting programs in a portion of high school districts. Similarly, to be eligible for the admissions program in Washington, students must be attending a high school participating in the WAGAP program; students must be enrolled in a participating school district in Wisconsin to be eligible as well.
- **Student eligibility is determined when a student applies to a postsecondary institution:** In some admissions redesigns (cascading, self-reported, guaranteed, dual, and system admissions), states and systems are typically not proactively reaching out to students, and so program scope is determined by the percentage of students who apply to a postsecondary institution, and not by decisions made by the state or system sponsoring the program.

⁷ New York City is the exception for the SUNY program, which has its own invitational admissions program through the City University of New York (CUNY).

Admissions redesigns also vary regarding whether two-year, four-year, or both types of institutions are included:

- **Only Two-Year Institutions:** The SUNY program for direct admissions to community colleges is unusual in that it only sends letters to students about a student's local community college(s). While these are open access institutions, sending proactive and personalized information to students about their postsecondary options can encourage enrollment.
- **Only Four-Year Institutions:** Not surprisingly, admissions redesigns commonly focus on four-year institutions, including regional institutions that often are looking to increase enrollment. For example, programs in South Dakota, New York, Washington, and Connecticut, among others, have developed admissions redesigns just for four-year institutions.
- **Both Types of Institutions:** Admissions redesigns such as those in Indiana, Idaho, and Minnesota include both two- and four-year institutions, encouraging students to not only consider a selective college or university, but also a local community or technical college as a way to start their postsecondary education.

It is also important to note that in many cases not all public four-years in the state or system participate. While in Idaho and Hawai'i, for example, all public postsecondary institutions are included in the admissions redesign program, those states are exceptions; flagship campuses commonly do not participate.

For example, all Universities of Wisconsin except the campuses in Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Madison do not participate in Direct Admit Wisconsin. Similarly, the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, and Georgia College and State University are not participating in GEORGIA MATCH because they require a standardized test score and consider factors beyond students' GPA in admissions. In contrast, while not all of the public campuses in Indiana and Minnesota are involved, both states also include some private colleges and universities.^{xxx}

Data Sources Leveraged in States and Systems

In order to determine whether a potential student is eligible for admission, the redesigns that include proactive notification (direct, informed, and invitational admissions) need access to pre-existing student achievement data, whereas other approaches do not typically require this as students are providing institutions with the data they need through an application process. States and systems utilize several different data sources:

- **State longitudinal data systems:** The Idaho State Board of Education utilizes the state's K12 longitudinal data system (i.e., Idaho System for Educational Excellence (ISEE)) to compare students' high school performance against their criteria to determine to which of the state's institutions they are admitted. NC College Connect uses existing student data that includes student high school transcript data from the NC Student Information System from every public high school, traditional district, or charter school.

- **High school identification:** For the Florida Talented Twenty program, school districts are responsible for identifying the top 20 percent of students from each eligible high school's graduating class and must submit data via the Florida Automated System for Transferring Educational Records (FASTER) electronic transcript system. Districts or schools are also responsible for notifying students of their Talented Twenty award. SUNY's Top 10% Promise also requires that high schools confirm student eligibility and provide a transcript through SUNY Application Manager.
- **State financial aid agency:** In Indiana, participating high schools upload student data to the *ScholarTrack* database, which is managed by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, which administers all state financial aid programs. Similarly, GEORGIA MATCH is a partnership between the University System of Georgia and the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), which uses scholarship eligibility data to determine who is eligible for the program.
- **Individual data vendors:** Finally, Direct Admissions Minnesota uses a different approach than any of the other programs. The state does not have a centralized data system, so the Minnesota Office of Higher Education works with multiple K12 data vendors that facilitate the connection between individual school district records and the centralized program.

Additionally, states and systems often must develop **data sharing agreements with the participating districts.** South Dakota law allows school districts to share directory information with the South Dakota Board of Regents; participating high schools, the South Dakota Department of Education, and the Board of Regents have data sharing agreements to ensure compliance with all applicable data privacy and security regulations. For WAGAP, participating districts must complete a joint data sharing agreement and letter of support. Participating high schools and Universities of Wisconsin campuses enter student grade point average data and campus admission requirements into two large student information systems: Infinite Campus or Skyward Schools. Students and families who participate agree to share these indicators to facilitate the direct admissions process.

Application Fee Waiver

Application fees can also create a barrier for student access to a postsecondary education by dissuading students from applying. For direct admissions, the application fee is waived in all states and systems, while in other redesigns it is not universally waived. For example, in Washington, students may have their application fee waived if they provide evidence of financial need. In other cases, fees are waived at particular points in the year, such as during College Application Week.



Eligibility Indicators

To determine whether a student is eligible for postsecondary admission through one of these redesigns, states and systems have to determine what indicators they will use, and what thresholds will be established, either across the state or system or at the institutional level. The most common eligibility indicator is high school GPA, while other indicators include exam scores (i.e., SAT, ACT, or state exams), individual courses or course grades. Further, states and systems can either establish **common achievement thresholds or allow the thresholds to vary across institutions**. For example:

- Washington has a **common GPA threshold** across institutions, where students must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher and have completed or are on track to complete all the College Academic Distribution Requirements.^{xxxix} Similarly, Connecticut high school seniors with a weighted GPA of 3.0 or an unweighted GPA of 2.75 are eligible for the CAAP program.

- In Idaho, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, **thresholds vary across institutions or sets of institutions**. Admission to all Idaho public 2-year and 4-year institutions (Letter of 8 institutions) requires an unweighted 3.0 GPA and a score in both English and math of at least a 3 on the 11th grade Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), as well as successful completion of Idaho's high school graduation requirements; lower GPA thresholds (unweighted GPA of 2.99-2.25) are used to determine admission to Lewis-Clark State College, Idaho State University and the state's community colleges (Letter of 6 institutions), while students with an unweighted GPA below 2.25 are notified that they are admitted to the state's community colleges (Letter of 4 institutions).^{xxxii} In Minnesota, institutions select one of six academic tiers, which consist of unweighted cumulative GPA bands on a 4.0 scale, and within two sets of tiers, a student's course grades in 10th and 11th grade math, English, and science.^{xxxiii} In Wisconsin, participating institutions have their own thresholds.^{xxxiv}



Program Opt-in

To address issues of data access, **many states and systems with admissions redesigns require students and/or the local high school or district to opt into the program to participate**. For example, SUNY's Top 10% Promise, as well as the programs in Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin require local districts or high schools *and* students to opt-into program participation:

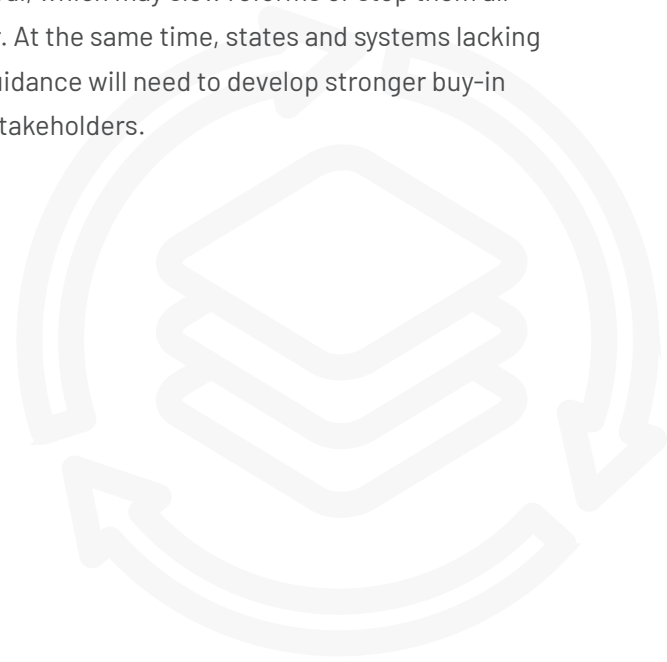
- For the SUNY Top 10% Promise, students are asked to opt-in and agree to have their academic records sent to SUNY; high schools then need to confirm student eligibility and provide transcript data.

- In Minnesota, participating high schools notify families of their participation in the program and allow them to opt-out if they choose.
- In Washington, school districts or high schools need to agree to be a WAGAP partner and students must opt-in to share academic and directory information with participating universities.
- The Universities of Wisconsin and school districts are given the opportunity to participate in the program, and depending on the high school, students also can decide whether to opt in or opt out of participation.

Additionally, the **postsecondary governance level** of the admissions redesign and level of **policy authorization** are important to acknowledge:

- **Postsecondary Governance Level:** Admissions redesign can take place at the state, system, or institutional level. Deciding which level makes sense can be influenced by multiple factors, including the postsecondary education governance and coordination structures in the state, the level of existing collaboration across postsecondary education agencies and systems, and the overall goals of the redesign. For example, Arizona’s three large universities operate rather independently, despite the Arizona Board of Regents’ oversight role, and Northern Arizona University’s Universal Admissions program is not required through state statute, and so the university adopted the admission redesign at the institutional level, coordinating with community colleges interested in becoming involved. In contrast, Idaho Campus Choice is a direct admissions program managed by staff at the Office of the Idaho State Board of Education (OSBE) and required under Board Policy IIIQ, and is facilitated by Idaho System for Educational Excellence, the state’s K-12 Longitudinal Data System.

- **Policy Authorization:** Some admissions redesigns are based on state statute, regulations, or board policy due to the extensive nature of the reform (e.g., Guaranteed Admissions programs require institutions to accept students who meet shared eligibility criteria) while other redesigns that just streamline the process may not require policy change (e.g., System Admissions simply allows students to apply to multiple institutions with a single application). The development of policy can have both pros and cons. For instance, while the passage of legislation requiring changes in postsecondary admissions provides the legal basis for redesigns, the process is often time-consuming and is not always successful, which may slow reforms or stop them all together. At the same time, states and systems lacking policy guidance will need to develop stronger buy-in among stakeholders.



Conclusion

As evidenced by this typology, admissions redesigns vary in many ways. While Direct Admissions includes all four strategies identified by Odle and Delaney, making it the most robust type of redesign, states and systems must develop admissions programs that fit their local context and the political and organizational landscape, including the postsecondary governance structure, student data systems, and institutional cultures and goals. Admissions redesigns have been shown in the literature to increase application rates, but can still fall short of ensuring increases in college enrollment due to the high cost of a postsecondary education in the United States. To achieve the goal of increasing enrollment and retention among students who otherwise might not consider college, admissions innovations should be coupled with messaging and accessibility regarding financial aid, the inclusion of which is a critical next step in supporting student access and success.



Acknowledgments

This research was made possible with the generous financial support of Lumina Foundation. We want to thank Lumina Foundation's team for their ongoing input and feedback, especially Melanie Heath, Ph.D. and Wendy Sedlak, Ph.D. We also want to thank the research advisory team and those who participated in data collection activities in Arizona, California and Illinois for their assistance. Many colleagues at Research for Action contributed to this report, including project team members Kri Burkander, Ph.D., Mark Duffy, Molly Pileggi, and Alita Robinson, as well as Kim Glassman, project advisor.



Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. We envision higher learning that is easy to navigate, addresses racial injustice, and meets the nation's talent needs through a broad range of credentials. We are working toward a system that prepares people for informed citizenship and success in a global economy.

End Notes

- ⁱ Odle, T. K. (2023). *Direct admissions: Reimagining college applications to promote equity*. The Campaign for College Opportunity. Retrieved from: <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FINAL-EIA-Direct-Admissions-comp.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Welding, Lyss. (February 15, 2024). "U.S. College Enrollment Decline: Facts and Figures." Best Colleges. Retrieved from: <https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/college-enrollment-decline/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Odle, T. K. (2023). *Direct admissions: Reimagining college applications to promote equity*. The Campaign for College Opportunity. Retrieved from: <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FINAL-EIA-Direct-Admissions-comp.pdf>
- ^{iv} Odle, T. K. and Delaney, J. (2023). *Experimental Evidence on "Direct Admissions" from Four States: Impacts on College Application and Enrollment*. (EdWorkingPaper: 23-834). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai23-834.pdf>
- ^v Gándara, P. (2001). *Paving the way to postsecondary education: K–12 intervention programs for underrepresented youth*. Washington, DC: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Access to Postsecondary Education.
- ^{vi} Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H., Bell, A., Thomas, S. L., & Li, C. (2008). A Typology of Federal and State Programs Designed to Promote College Enrollment. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(3), 243–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2008.11772098>
- ^{vii} Odle, T. K. (2023). *Direct admissions: Reimagining college applications to promote equity*. The Campaign for College Opportunity. Retrieved from: <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FINAL-EIA-Direct-Admissions-comp.pdf>
- ^{viii} Next Steps Idaho – What is Apply Idaho? <https://nextsteps.idaho.gov/application-guide>
- ^{ix} FAST TRACK ADMISSION FACT SHEET: https://sdbor.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SDFactSheet_24.pdf
- ^x State University of New York – SUNY’s Top 10% Promise: <https://www.suny.edu/attend/top10-promise/#campuses>
- ^{xi} State University of New York – SUNY’s Top 10% Promise: <https://www.suny.edu/attend/top10-promise/#campuses>
- ^{xii} SUNY Report on Long-Term Enrollment and Financial Sustainability. (January 2024). Retrieved from: https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/govt-relations/state/SUNY-Report-on-Enrollment-and-Financial-Sustainability_January2024.pdf; The State University of New York. (June 5, 2023). "SUNY Chancellor King Announces Nearly 125k Graduating High School Seniors Receiving Community College Acceptance Letter In The Mail." Retrieved from: <https://www.suny.edu/suny-news/press-releases/6-23/6-5-23/cc-admit.html>
- ^{xiii} https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/govt-relations/state/SUNY-Report-on-Enrollment-and-Financial-Sustainability_January2024.pdf
- ^{xiv} Universities of Wisconsin – Direct Admit Wisconsin: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/direct-admissions/#:~:text=The%20Direct%20Admit%20Wisconsin%20program%20will%20launch%20starting%20with%20the,a%20participating%20Wisconsin%20high%20school.>
- ^{xv} Minnesota Office of Higher Education. (February 1, 2024) Direct Admissions Report. Retrieved from: https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/Documents/Direct%20Admissions/OHE_Direct%20Admissions%20Report_2024_ADA.pdf; Direct Admissions Frequently Asked Questions for High School Partners: https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/Documents/Direct%20Admissions//Direct%20Admissions%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20for%20High%20School%20Partners_ADA%202023%202024.pdf
- ^{xvi} Washington State Council of Presidents – Washington Guaranteed Admissions Program (WAGAP): https://councilofpresidents.org/_admissions/guaranteed-admissions-program-gap/; Washington Guaranteed Admissions Frequently Asked Questions for Students and Families:
- ^{xvii} SUNY Report on Long-Term Enrollment and Financial Sustainability. (January 2024). Retrieved from: https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/govt-relations/state/SUNY-Report-on-Enrollment-and-Financial-Sustainability_January2024.pdf
- ^{xviii} Connecticut Automatic Admission Program (CAAP): <https://www.ct.edu/autoadmit>
- ^{xix} My Texas Future – Direct Admissions: <https://www.mytexasfuture.org/middle-high-school/direct-admissions/>
- ^{xx} Admit Utah: <https://admitutah.org/>
- ^{xxi} GEORGIA MATCH: <https://www.gafutures.org/college-planning/georgia-match>

End Notes

- ^{xxii} Indiana Pre-Admissions: <https://learnmoreindiana.org/preadmit/>
- ^{xxiii} University of California Admissions – Statewide Guarantee: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/freshman-requirements/california-residents/statewide-guarantee/>
- ^{xxiv} University of California ELC program: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/first-year-requirements/california-residents/local-guarantee-elc.html>
- ^{xxv} Florida Department of Education – Talented Twenty Program: [https://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/pre-collegiate/talented-twenty-program/#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20Talented,Governors%20Regulation%206.002%20\(PDF\)](https://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/pre-collegiate/talented-twenty-program/#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20Talented,Governors%20Regulation%206.002%20(PDF))
- ^{xxvi} Explanation of Automatic College Admission And Curriculum Requirements For Financial Aid For High School Students: <https://tea.texas.gov/system/files/Explanation%20of%20Automatic%20College%20Admission%20Fig.%2061.1201a1.pdf>
- ^{xxvii} UT News – Top 10% Law: <https://news.utexas.edu/topics-in-the-news/top-10-percent-law/>
- ^{xxviii} Dual Admission: <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/dual-admission>
- ^{xxix} Ivy Tech Community College – Dual Admission: <https://www.ivytech.edu/programs/special-programs-for-students/attend-two-colleges-at-the-same-time/dual-admission/>
- ^{xxx} Direct Admissions Minnesota Participating Colleges and Universities: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=2522>; Indiana Pre-Admissions: Your Path to College: <https://learnmoreindiana.org/preadmit/>
- ^{xxxi} Washington Guaranteed Admissions Program (WAGAP): https://councilofpresidents.org/_admissions/guaranteed-admissions-program-gap/
- ^{xxxii} ID SBOE policy 3Q: <https://boardofed.idaho.gov/board-policies-rules/board-policies/higher-education-affairs-section-iii/iii-q-admission-standards/>
- ^{xxxiii} Minnesota Office of Higher Education. (February 1, 2024) Direct Admissions Report. Retrieved from: https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/Documents/Direct%20Admissions/OHE_Direct%20Admissions%20Report_2024_ADA.pdf
- ^{xxxiv} Indiana Pre-Admissions: Your Path to College: <https://cdn.learnmoreindiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Additional-Admission-Requirements-2025.pdf>; Direct Admit Wisconsin – High School Partner Information: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/direct-admissions/participating-high-schools/>