



January 19, 2023

Dear College and University Presidents,

The Colorado Re-Engaged (CORE) Initiative enables four-year higher education institutions to award an associate degree to eligible students who have stopped out of a baccalaureate program after earning at least 70 credit hours. These former students have invested a significant amount of time and money to advance their knowledge and skills through higher education, but lack an academic credential to reflect this investment. By awarding an associate degree in recognition of academic credits already completed, Colorado's four-year institutions can open new career opportunities for individual degree recipients, strengthen the state's workforce and economy, and create pathways for these former students to reengage in higher education.

**Benefits to individuals who receive an earned associate degree**

Each year, many students enrolled in baccalaureate programs are forced to pause or discontinue their postsecondary education by circumstances beyond their control. Associate degrees awarded under CORE are not intended to be a replacement for, or equivalent to, a bachelor's degree, but they can provide measurable benefits to the students who earn them. On average, individuals with an associate degree have higher annual earnings, lower rates of unemployment, and access to more high-quality employment opportunities than those with only a high school diploma.

**Benefits to Colorado's economy and workforce**

In addition to increasing income potential and employment opportunities for individual degree recipients, the CORE Initiative can improve economic prospects for the communities in which those individuals work and live. By increasing the number of Coloradoans with an academic credential, CORE can also expand the state's workforce and support the continued economic recovery of the business community.

**Benefits to Colorado's four-year universities and colleges**

Awarding an earned associate degree can provide the institution with a powerful tool to promote re-engagement. Participating institutions can increase student enrollment numbers by providing targeted assistance and outreach to associate degree recipients to enable them to re-engage, re-enroll and complete their bachelor's degree.

Given the potential for the CORE Initiative to benefit individuals, institutions, and the state's economy, we encourage all eligible institutions of higher education in Colorado to participate in this innovative first-in-the-nation program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Angie Paccione  
Executive Director

Jared Polis  
Governor

