Minutes of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Meeting

Virtual

**October 24, 2024**

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Walmer called the business meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

1. **Opening Business**
2. Attendance

Commissioners attending: Chair Walmer, Vice Chair Gonzales, Commissioners Barkin, Harber, Hughes, Kostenbauer, Tucker, Walker Harvey, Executive Director Paccione

Advisors attending: Senator Zenzinger, Senator Marchman, Senator Baisley, Mark Cavanaugh, Dr. Michael Lightner, Mark Superka, Leilani Domingo, Jamie Viefhaus-Zak, Danielle Ongart, Dr. Melinda Piket-May,

1. Approval of the Minutes for the September 5, 2024Commission Meeting

Commissioner Tucker moved to approve the September minutes. Seconded by Vice Chair Gonzales. The motion was approved with no opposition.

1. Reports
   1. Chair - Chair Walmer shared that on October 2nd there was a joint meeting with the CTN where Crystal Collins, CFO,CDHE, presented the funding formula. The recording for this meeting is available. She mentioned that they are developing a webpage for the formula review. Chair Walmer went on to share that they have been engaged in additional meetings related to feedback from the formula review.

Chair Walmer then shared that she has requested a few quotes for the survey that the Commission discussed in September. She plans to come back to the commission for additional feedback as they move forward through these steps together.

Chair Walmer introduced Rachel Fischer, Legislative Liaison, CDHE. Rachel comes with a lot of higher education experience and we are lucky to have her!

Chair Walmer went on to remind the Commission that the Governor will release his budget on November 1st. She advised Commissioners that they can expect an invitation to the briefing following the release of the budget and encouraged them to participate.

Lastly, Chair Walmer thanked Senator Rachel Zenzinger for her incredible leadership on all issues related to education. Sen. Zenzinger has been an incredibly active advisor to the Commission and celebrated her warmly on this, her final CCHE meeting. Sen Zenzinger responded thankfully and stated that the pleasure was all hers as the Commission has been her favorite assignment during her time in legislature.

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* 1. Vice Chair – Vice Chair Gonzales echoed Chair Walmer’s sentiments and gratitude for Sen. Zenzinger. She also gave kudos to and thanked Dr. Gillian McKnight Tutien, Chief Education Equity Officer, CDHE and her planning team. The Equity day of Action that Dr. G and the team planned was incredible Vice Chair Gonzales was honored to be present. She also congratulated Chancellor Joe Garcia, CCCS. He received the inaugural Equity Champion Legacy Award at the Equity Day of Action!
  2. Commission Standing Committee
     1. Student Success & Workforce Alignment – Commissioner Abramson could not attend today's meeting but he did send an update for Chair Walmer to share. She reported that the SS&WA Committee has been prioritizing a landscape inventory and gap analysis of the post-secondary pathways of all types especially those in demand career pathways. She also mentioned that Commissioner Abramson is working with staff and other agencies to ensure that efforts are leveraged rather than duplicated. This committee wanted the Commission to know that while there has been some interest raised for a fully-interactive platform here in Colorado, this will not be something that they will focus on. There may be some opportunity here for CDHE, workforce development and our philanthropic partners. For now, this Committee will focus on improving the existing platform that Colorado has and seeing where there is a need for more of a “heat map” to be developed.
     2. Finance, Performance & Accountability - Commissioner Tucker reported that this Committee has met 3 times since the September CCHE meeting and they have a moved a lot of items to the consent and action agendas today. This Committee will be presenting on several key items today that include, for profit institutions and state financial funding, the allocation formula, and the working group membership for the funding formula review process.

Commissioner Tucker also shared that this Committee has a discussion item for today regarding statutory requirements for the current budget and if that work will need to be repeated in the FY 2025. He encouraged the Commission to begin that work sooner than later.

* 1. Commissioners.

Commissioner Harber thanked Sen. Zenzinger for her service to the students of Colorado, The Commission and the General Assembly! He said the State of Colorado has been really fortunate to have some like her at the Capitol. Sen. Zenzinger replied thankfully.

* 1. Advisors

**Advisor** Dr. Piket-May thanked Tricia Johnson, Deputy Director, CDHE for speaking at the Colorado and Wyoming Network of Women Leaders in Vail, CO. Advisor Dr. Pikey-May said that Tricia did a fabulous job and it was extremely well received!

Advisor Dr. Piket-May also shared a report from the Colorado Faculty Advisory Committee. A major focus for this group right now is AI and how that impacts how they teach and what they teach. They also have a focus on the lower credit requirements for different degrees and the impacts this could have on different institutions.

Advisor Zenzinger shared that there was a report in the newspaper about how the number of students attending higher education is down around the country. This is not the case for Colorado so we have a lot to be proud of. Overall higher education attendance in Colorado is up! She would like to see someone from the Commission submit a letter to the editor of that newspaper to comment that while that may be a national trend it is not the case in Colorado. Chair Walmer added that Advisor Zenzinger made a great suggestion.

1. **Executive Director Report**

Executive Director Paccione – Executive Director Paccione began by acknowledging Chancellor Tony Frank who was present for the meeting. She then mentioned the Educational Equity Day of Action that took place last month and gave Kudos to Dr. G. and her team for their work on that event. Dr. Paccione also thanked the department for all of their hard work reconciling our SLRF programs. This has been quite a bit of work for all involved.

Executive Director Paccione went on the share that the Gen Ed Council met on Monday. That meeting was well attended by faculty from institutions all over the state. She reported that there is really good work being done by our faculty and institutions!

Dr. Paccione also reported that we had another successful Free Application Days. The word was out and students were waiting so they could submit multiple applications and save some money at the same time! She also mentioned that we have quite a few institutions in Colorado that are offering free applications all year around and CSU Fort Collins, MSU Denver and the Community Colleges are among them!

Dr. Paccione went on to share that she attended the Human Potential Summit last week and it was very inspirational. Much of the focus of the summit was to make sure that students have pathways that go beyond 4-year institutions. She mentioned that the Department and the Commission would like to give students many pathways to their selected careers.

Dr. Paccione informed the Commission of the multiple site visits that are coming up and invited them to join her. She will be visiting Jeffco Workforce Center as well as Regis University in the coming weeks.

Executive Director Paccione also shared that there have been some enrollment increases that are notable. One being a 51% increase in African American student applications for CU Boulder. She called this the Prime Effect! She also mentioned that CSU Fort Collins had the second highest freshman class in its history and MSU Denver also had an increase in enrollment.

Finally, Dr. Paccione asked Sophia Laderman, Chief Policy and Data Officer for CDHE, to provide the Commission a summary of the new policy brief from the New American Organization.

Sophia shared the brief that they released deconstructs the data behind the idea that college enrollment is declining or is stagnant because people are questioning the value of the college degree. While Americans may not trust some public institutions, Higher Education remains the fourth trusted public institution in the country. Additionally, they report that college enrollment has mostly declined due to broader demographic and economic trends, not necessarily concerns about the value of a degree or a credential. While most parents still want their children to go to college, there are concerns about whether it is affordable for them. Roughly 75 percent of the American public wants the government, both state and federal government to provide more funding to make college affordable.

1. **Public Comment –** No public comment

1. **Consent Items** (*5 minutes)*
2. Degree Authorization – Approval of the Renewal of Authorization for Grand Canyon University – *Heather DeLange, Director Office of Private Postsecondary Education*
3. Degree Authorization – Approval of the Renewal of Authorization for Denver College of Nursing – *Heather DeLange, Director Office of Private Postsecondary Education*
4. Degree Authorization – Approval of the Renewal of Religious Training Institution Authorization - *Heather DeLange, Director Office of Private Postsecondary Education*
5. Degree Authorization – Approval of Provisional Authorization for Concordia University, St. Paul – *Heather DeLange, Director Office of Private Postsecondary Education*
6. Program Reauthorization — Approval of Educator Loan Program Reauthorization – *Corey Evans, Budget Director*
7. Program Reauthorization — Approval of Educator Stipend Program Reauthorization – *Corey Evans, Budget Director*
8. Capital Project Spending Authority — Approval of Expedited Cash Spending Authority for Colorado Mesa University Centennial Village Student Housing – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*
9. Capital Projects Spending Authority — Approval of Cash Spending Authority for Colorado School of Mines Quantum COmmons Existing Lab Building Renovations, Quantum COmmons New Cleanroom Building – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*
10. Recommended Approval of a Regular Supplemental Request for Trinidad State College Freudenthal Library Renovation, Phase 1 and 2 – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*
11. Capital Projects Spending Authority — Approval of Cash Spending Authority for Colorado State University, Fort Collins Don and Susie Law Engineering Future Technologies Building, Colorado State Forest Service Nursery Renovation – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*
12. Capital Projects — Approval of Fiscal Year 2025-26 Capital Submission Program Plans – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*
13. Capital Projects Spending Authority — Approval of Cash Spending Authority for Fort Lewis College Apartment Acquisition – *Kennedy Evans, Budget and Policy Analyst*

Commissioner Tucker motioned to approve the consent agenda and Vice Chair Gonzales second the motion. The consent agenda was approved with no opposition.

1. **Action Items** *(60 minutes)*
   1. Recommendation for Approval of For-Profit Institution to Receive State-Funded Financial Aid – *Corey Evans, Budget Director*

This request was for the approval of Intellitec College to receive state financial aid due to an ownership change. The last college to apply to and go through this process was Lincoln College of Technology in 2018. Chair Walmer requested department staff come back before March 2025 with recommendations of new policies for the process and to run Intellitec’s request through the new process.

The Commission did not vote on this item today. This item is postponed until March 2025.

* 1. Recommendation for Approval of the Funding Allocation Formula for Fiscal Year 2025-26 – *Crystal L. Collins, Chief Financial Officer*

Crystal Collins shared a presentation with the Commission and spoke briefly about the funding appropriations per FTE and Colorado’s ranking nationally. Colorado has received the 3rd lowest appropriation support per FTE nationally. We were ranking 7th or 8th for the FY 22/23. This change is a testament to our own success her in Colorado. Crystal’s presentation is available on the CCHE website for review.

Commissioner Tucker motioned to approve action item B and Commissioner Barkin second the motion. The action item was approved with no opposition.

* 1. Recommendation for Funding Formula Working Group Membership – *Crystal L. Collins, Chief Financial Officer*

Crystal Collins reported that the FPA Committee held a special meeting on October 4th to discuss the development of a working group for reviewing the funding formula. The initial draft for this group includes 16 institutional representatives, 7 government representatives, and 3 agency representatives. This draft was sent out to get feedback from the CEOs and CFOs at the institutions. They did receive feedback from about half of those contacted. You can review Crystals presentation on CCHE website.

Commissioner Tucker motioned to approve action item C and Commissioner Hughes second the motion. The action item was approved with no opposition.

* 1. Approval of Proposed CCHE 2025 Meeting Dates — *Renee Patilla, Executive Assistant*

Chair Walmer explained that we have added dates and will meet each month in 2025 so that we can stay on timeline set for the Funding Formula Review. Since the Commission does not usually meet 12 times in a year, there may be some light agendas for some of the meetings.

Commissioner Hughes motioned to approve action item D and Vice Chair Gonzales second the motion. The action item was approved with a note that there is always an option to join the meeting virtually.

1. **Discussion Items** *(85 minutes)*
   1. HLC – Reduced-Credit Bachelor’s Programs – *Zach Waymer, HLC- Government Affairs Officer, Stephanie Kramer, HLC-Director of Accreditation Systems, Chris Rasmussen, Senior Director of Academic Pathways and Innovation*

Representatives of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) shared information on a recently-launched process for institutions to propose “reduced-credit” bachelor’s degrees to HLC for approval. A “reduced-credit” bachelor’s degree is one that is below the standard 120-credit threshold but is at least 90 credits. Institutions have always had the latitude to propose degrees that depart from the generally accepted 120-credit minimum, but given movement in other states and regions the HLC board approved a quality assurance process specifically for reduced-credit bachelor’s degrees under the existing “substantive change” umbrella. Degrees would need to demonstrate comparable depth and breadth of knowledge delivery and student acquisition of competencies; the peer review and broader quality assurance process is oriented accordingly.

Dr. Rasmussen noted that a statutory change would be needed for public institutions in Colorado to award sub-baccalaureate degrees, given language that directs CCHE to develop standards for a 120-credit bachelor’s degree; this has been confirmed by representatives of the Colorado Office of the Attorney General. Dr. Rasmussen advised that a policy approach to reduced-credit bachelor’s degree should be focused first and foremost on advancing student opportunity and workforce success, and then to 2) meet employer needs; 3) minimize confusion in the marketplace on the substance and value of a bachelor’s degree; 4) facilitate institutional innovation; 5) prevent a “race to the bottom” in moving a critical mass of bachelor’s to the 90-credit level; and 6) establish reasonable guardrails that reflect commission priorities and minimize potential hazards.

* 1. Colorado’s Pathways Work – *Peter Fritz, Director of Student Transitions and Degree Completion Initiatives*

Mr. Fritz provided the Commission an overview of two projects related to creating stackable credential pathways in Colorado. The first project, under SB22-192, has been completed. This project was led by Dr. Ruthanne Orihuela and focused on the creation of 11 new stackable credential pathways in five industries: behavioral health, cyber security, early childhood education, health care and software development. The SB22-192 project also distributed about $1.5 million to local district colleges, technical colleges and four-year universities that funded student access to non-degree credential programs in high demand industries. The project also provided over $400,000 in technical assistance grants to Colorado IHEs to support the creation of new non-degree credentials and/or stackable credential pathways within those institutions.

The second project, under SB24-143, started in September, 2024. The source legislation states that “Colorado requires a system that brings quality assurance, clarity and order to the complex landscape of both non-degree and traditional degree credentials by employing a quality assurance framework and an internationally recognized standard classification system.” The legislation tasks the Department with assigning International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED codes) to the non-degree credentials that are part of the 11 stackable pathways created in the first project. The Department is also required to create a report for the legislature, by July 2025, with recommendations concerning the use of ISCED as Colorado’s standard framework for organizing and classifying all non-degree credentials. The Department will collaborate with a number of stakeholders and partners to complete this work including employers, industry associations, trade associations, CDLE, State Work Force Development Council and the Colorado Department of Education, learners and earners, and two-year and four-year institutions.

* 1. Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) Program Redesign Update – *Dr. Cynthia Armendariz, COSI Managing Director*

Dr. Armendariz provided a progress update of the [COSI program redesign](https://cdhe.colorado.gov/cosi-program-review-redesign). Over the last two years, COSI engaged with [Third Sector Capitol Partners](https://www.thirdsectorcap.org/) to lead this work. The goal of COSI’s Program Redesign is to align the Matching Student Scholarship Program and Community Partner Postsecondary Program grants to ensure all students are equipped to succeed. The COSI students will receive both financial and student support services. The redesign is divided into four sections.

* Phase One: Exploration
  + In Phase one of the redesign process (October 2022-March 2023), Third Sector solicited and synthesized feedback from COSI grantees and board members and combined this qualitative data with best practices from the field and Third Sector’s experience working with other programs across the country, to make recommendations to COSI.
* Phase Two: Planning (2024)
  + The feedback and planning phase focuses on stakeholder engagement, program development, staff structure, budget impact and forecasting, and evaluation plans.
* Phase Three: Application (2025)
  + The request for proposal will be released in early 2025. COSI will provide technical assistance throughout the year with the application will be due in September. The Board will review and vote on awards in November 2025.
* Phase Four: Launch (2026)
  + The COSI team will provide technical assistance to develop and implement the program with an official launch date of July 1, 2026, in time for fall 2026.
  1. Continued conversations on using Colorado’s Minimum Value Threshold findings and collaborative conversations – *Michael Vente, Chief Performance Officer & Senior Director of Research and Data Governance*

Mr. Vente provided the Commission with updates related to on-going work that the Department has been engaged in around calculated the Colorado Minimum Value Threshold (MVT) for Colorado postsecondary education programs. He relayed special thanks to Education Strategy Group (ESG) for their support in facilitating conversations (and specifically Dr. Emily House, Dr. Gina Johnson and Disraeli Cruz). Department staff were working to finalize various summary documents on the MVT calculation process and would share those once completed.

Mr. Vente also shared continued analysis on the MVT calculation output by degree level. He noted that data suppression increases significantly when data are disaggregated by institution, completer cohort, degree level, and program. Due to these data suppression considerations, he suggested that rolling-up all institutional level data while still applying disaggregation by completer cohort, degree level, and program would reduce data suppression and support analysis of potential statewide trends.

Mr. Vente said that institution-specific MVT data were being updated and would be shared with their respective governing boards in the coming weeks. He asked the Commission if the MVT output with a roll-up of all institutions with disaggregation by completer cohort, degree level, and program could be shared with governing boards (for comparison between institution MVT data to statewide MVT data). Chair Walmer supported the sharing of those statewide MVT data with governing boards. Mr. Vente said that Department staff would share statewide MVT data with commissioners as well. Conversations around next steps for use of the MVT outputs would continue at the Commission’s December meeting.

* 1. Statewide Longitudinal Data System Update – *Michael Vente, Chief Performance Officer & Senior Director of Research and Data Governance*

Mr. Vente provided the Commission with a brief update on conversations related to the Colorado Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) work led by the Office of Information Technology (OIT). Mr. Vente provided an overview of use cases that the advisory boards were considering with specific attention to reporting requirements outlined in HB24-1364. OIT will release a report in January with updates on this work to date. Mr. Vente will collaborate with OIT on that report and ensure that the Department aligns this work with goals around better longitudinal data outlined in HB22-1349.