



Measures to Improve Postsecondary Education Outcomes for Students with a Disability

**Second Data Report on Students with Disabilities in
Colorado Institutions of Higher Education**

2025

Prepared and submitted by the
Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)
Report to the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Colorado
General Assembly as Part of the State Measures for Accountable, Responsive, and
Transparent Government Act Hearing
Statute: C.R.S. §23-79-102.
January 2025

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Introduction

In April 2022, [HB22-1255 \(web\)](#), “Concerning Measures to Improve Postsecondary Education Outcomes for Students with Disabilities” was signed into law by Governor Jared Polis. The act included two main requirements:

- 1) Create an **advisory committee** charged with making recommendations in the form of two reports to Colorado institutions of higher education (IHEs) and the general assembly concerning services and practices to improve outcomes for students with disabilities (SWDs) in higher education. The first report was released in June 2023, and the second report was released in June 2024.
- 2) Charged the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) with **reporting on data** from institutions of higher education on students with disabilities. The first report was due during the State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) Act hearing in January 2024, and thereafter every January.

Information regarding data required to be collected:

Data from all state IHEs (four-year, two-year, local district colleges, and area technical colleges) as well as participating private institutions defined by 23-18-102(8) which includes Colorado Christian University, Regis University and University of Denver.

Data should provide totals and disaggregated by IHE and demographics listed below:

- Number of students enrolled with disabilities;
- SWDs who receive a “service, support or accommodation related to the student’s disability”;
- Fall to fall retention numbers for SWD (not available);
- Graduate numbers of SWD (not available);
- Number of SWDs who received service from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, including the number of graduates (not available); and

- Disaggregated by the following demographics:
 - Race and ethnicity;
 - First generation;
 - Pell Grant eligibility; and
 - Military/veteran status.

Definitions, Data and Limitations

For reporting purposes, the department and the institutions of higher education use the following definitions for **disability** and **accommodation**:

- **Disability**, as included in the Act, means, with respect to an individual—a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual (referencing the American with Disabilities Act definition).
- Reasonable **accommodations** are modifications or adjustments to the tasks, environment or the way things are usually done that enable individuals with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program or a job (U.S. Department of Education, 2007 - From the American Psychological Association). Note: Modifications pertain to physical or logistical adaptations to learning materials and resources. Modifications may not represent a fundamental alteration to the learning objectives or program/degree requirements.

This is the second statewide report to include data on SWDs. This year would have been the first year for which additional student outcomes data, including retention and completion rates, would have become available via existing departmental data collections. However, these data collections were affected by the June 19, 2023, CDHE cybersecurity attack. As a result, retention and completion data for students with disabilities will not become available until the 2026 report.

As with the first report, data for this report was collected via a spreadsheet from each IHE. In the future, CDHE will include SWD data reported from Colorado IHEs to the Student Unit Record Data System (SURDS) which allows for the data analysis (as available) listed in the act. Future data analysis from SURDS allows CDHE to include matching data received from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) – most institutions are not able to report on students who receive services from DVR. Also, IHEs can currently only report military and veteran status for non-resident students awarded in-state tuition classification as allowed by statutory exceptions. As such, IHEs do not report on their entire military/veteran student population to SURDS. As a result, more SWDs are active duty and veterans than captured in this report.

Collecting data for students with disabilities is not the only challenge in Colorado. Many factors impact accurate data collection nationwide, including:

- Many students with disabilities feel stigmatized and as a result, may choose not to disclose their disability or need for an accommodation with their college/university;
- Some students transitioning from high school to college are not aware of the differences in federal law between K-12 and higher education and do not know how to self-identify to the IHE (many of the differences are explained on this U.S. Department of Education page);
- Some students notify departments of their disability other than the office that provides disability services and accommodations, as a result, the information is not captured for reporting purposes; and
- Most IHEs only know if a student has a disability if they request accommodation, so often the numbers between enrolled SWDs and SWDs receiving accommodations are the same.

The excerpt below from the Disability Services Advisory Committee’s second report (page 15) further describes the challenges listed above:

“According to a study from the University of Colorado Medical School, undergraduate students with a disability were at a 70% greater risk of burnout, whereas undergraduate students with multiple disabilities were at a 254% greater risk of burnout.¹ Additionally, stigma is a greater detriment for students needing accommodations. In an analysis of 2,709 students who responded to a survey of undergraduate students at

the University of Michigan, among 63.9% of 1,368 respondents who needed accommodations, 19% reported that they did not seek accommodations for reasons other than needing it.² The stigmatization of disability and lack of community lead many students to believe that their best interest is to separate their academics from who they are and bootstrap their studies independently, without academic support and a welcoming disability community, contributing to high rates of burnout and isolation.”

This and subsequent reports have already been a catalyst for conversation between Colorado’s colleges and universities and CDHE as to how to best address these issues so that we can better identify, report and support students with disabilities in higher education and enhance our ability to improve their outcomes.

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¹ Nguyen, M., Meeks, L. M., Pereira-Lima, K., Bullock, J. L., Addams, A. N., Moreland, C. J., & Boatright, D. B. (2024). Medical student burnout by race, ethnicity, and multiple disability status. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.51046>

² Meeks, L. M., Pereira-Lima, K., Plegue, M., Stergiopoulos, E., Jain, N. R., Addams, A., & Moreland, C. J. (2022). Assessment of accommodation requests reported by a national sample of US MD students by category of disability. *JAMA*, 328(10), 982. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2022.12283>

Data

The data below represents the following terms of enrollment: Academic year 2023 (summer 2022; fall 2022; and spring 2023); and academic year 2024 (summer 2023; fall 2023; and spring 2024). As mentioned in the previous section, while the below numbers are not a complete representation of the number of SWDs enrolled at our state IHEs, they are fundamental in advancing conversations that can lead to improved processes, services, and outreach for our students with disabilities.

Key Findings

- Colorado IHEs reported 26,743 (6.8%) enrolled SWDs for AY 2024, up 2.8% from AY 2023 total of 25,684 (6.6%);
- University of Colorado Boulder reported the highest number of SWDs (6,050) and Fort Lewis College reported the highest percentage of SWDs (14.1%);
- Of Pell Grant-eligible students, 10.9% were reported to have a disability (highest demographic percentage);
- The highest race and ethnicity percentages reported for SWDs were two or more races (8.8%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (7.8%) and White (7.8%); and
- 7.7% of female and 5.5% of male students were reported to have a disability.

TABLE 1: Total number of students from all institutions, compared to the total number of students with a disability in academic years 2023 and 2024.

Academic Year	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Percentage of Students with a Disclosed Disability
2024	393,781	26,743	6.8%
2023	388,879	25,684	6.6%
Percent change	1.3%	4.1%	0.2 percentage points

Note: Student academic year headcounts are one year lagged compared to the counts for students with disabilities.

Sources: Colorado Department of Higher Education Aggregate Institutional Data Collection and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

TABLE 2: Statewide Total of Students with Disabilities, including demographics and students reported as receiving accommodations, for Academic Year 2024.

Demographic	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Students with Disclosed Disabilities (Percentage)	Students Receiving Disability Accommodations	Students with Disability Accommodations (Percentage)
Gender					
Male	174,677	9,668	5.5%	8,657	5.0%
Female	219,104	16,880	7.7%	15,450	7.1%
Unknown/Other	N/A	195	N/A	185	N/A
Race and Ethnicity					
U.S. Nonresident	13,480	423	3.1%	368	2.7%
Hispanic of any race	82,535	4,442	5.4%	4,052	4.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3,565	278	7.8%	212	5.9%
Asian	16,430	869	5.3%	792	4.8%
Black or African American	18,649	1,024	5.5%	955	5.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	804	47	5.8%	44	5.5%
White	225,870	17,704	7.8%	16,089	7.1%
Two or more races	18,058	1,598	8.8%	1,437	8.0%
Unknown	14,390	516	3.6%	487	3.4%
Additional Breakdowns					
First Generation	N/A	6,628	N/A	6,031	N/A
Pell Grant Eligible	55,083	6,004	10.9%	5,518	10.0%
Active Duty of Veteran	N/A	1,260	N/A	1,194	N/A
Number receiving service from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (if known)	N/A	27	N/A	26	N/A
Total	393,781	26,743	6.8%	24,292	6.2%

Note: Student academic year headcounts are one year lagged compared to the counts for students with disabilities.

Sources: Colorado Department of Higher Education Aggregate Institutional Data Collection and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Data by Institution of Higher Education

TABLE 3: Number and percentage of students with disclosed disabilities by institution of higher education, for academic years 2023 to 2024.

Institution	Academic Year 2023			Academic Year 2024			Percent Change
	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Students with Disclosed Disabilities (Percentage)	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Students with Disclosed Disabilities (Percentage)	
Adams State University	3,833	112	2.9%	3,715	99	2.7%	-11.6%
Aims Community College	9,037	265	2.9%	9,643	305	3.2%	15.1%
Arapahoe Comm College	15,853	1,266	8.0%	18,458	873	4.7%	-31.0%
Colorado Christian University	15,662	558	3.6%	16,658	477	2.9%	-14.5%
Colorado Mesa University	10,038	682	6.8%	10,133	682	6.7%	0.0%
Colorado Mt College	7,424	225	3.0%	7,235	316	4.4%	40.4%
Colorado Northwestern Comm College	1,533	22	1.4%	1,501	27	1.8%	22.7%
CO School of Mines	7,789	775	9.9%	7,872	769	9.8%	-0.8%
Colorado State University - FC	36,664	3,521	9.6%	36,856	4,104	11.1%	16.6%
Colorado State U - Global	16,053	289	1.8%	14,535	170	1.2%	-41.2%
Colorado State U - Pueblo	12,257	221	1.8%	11,857	262	2.2%	18.6%
Community College of Aurora	10,701	234	2.2%	11,031	231	2.1%	-1.3%
Community College of Denver	10,392	358	3.4%	10,907	387	3.5%	8.1%
Emily Griffith Tech College	5,854	39	0.7%	6,240	26	0.4%	-33.3%
Fort Lewis College	3,983	516	13.0%	3,835	542	14.1%	5.0%
Front Range CC	27,228	1,348	5.0%	28,805	1,738	6.0%	28.9%
Lamar Community College	844	36	4.3%	814	21	2.6%	-41.7%

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Colorado Department of Higher Education

Institution	Academic Year 2023			Academic Year 2024			Percent Change
	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Students with Disclosed Disabilities (Percentage)	All Students	Students with Disclosed Disabilities	Students with Disclosed Disabilities (Percentage)	
Metro State U Denver	21,698	1,586	7.3%	21,129	1,772	8.4%	11.7%
Morgan Comm College	1,730	14	0.8%	1,863	22	1.2%	57.1%
Northeastern College	1,814	61	3.4%	1,826	65	3.6%	6.6%
Otero College	1,451	42	2.9%	1,248	37	3.0%	-11.9%
Pickens Tech College	1,049	81	7.7%	983	21	2.1%	-74.1%
Pikes Peak State College	15,030	769	5.1%	15,754	752	4.8%	-2.2%
Pueblo Comm College	8,074	239	3.0%	8,548	162	1.9%	-32.2%
Red Rocks College	9,917	502	5.1%	10,989	588	5.4%	17.1%
Regis University	6,676	272	4.1%	5,878	288	4.9%	5.9%
Tech College of Rockies	308	13	4.2%	370	17	4.6%	30.8%
Trinidad State College	2,185	23	1.1%	2,284	39	1.7%	69.6%
Univ of Colorado Boulder	43,746	4,629	10.6%	44,787	6,050	13.5%	30.7%
Univ of Colorado Colorado Springs	15,264	1,654	10.8%	14,894	1,345	9.0%	-18.7%
University of Colorado Denver & Anschutz	29,833	1,768	5.9%	29,702	1,336	4.5%	-24.4%
Univ of Denver	17,202	2,492	14.5%	16,672	2,041	12.2%	-18.1%
Univ of Northern Colorado	12,017	761	6.3%	10,992	882	8.0%	15.9%
Western Col University	5,740	311	5.4%	5,767	297	5.1%	-4.5%
Total	388,879	25,684	6.6%	393,781	26,743	6.8%	4.1%

Notes: Includes all students who disclosed a disability (including those who did not receive accommodations). Student academic year headcounts are one year lagged compared to the counts for students with disabilities.

Sources: Colorado Department of Higher Education Aggregate Institutional Data Collection and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Data by Institution of Higher Education with Demographics

Visit the [Disability Services web page](#) to review data by institution of higher education in Colorado.

Next Steps

The following work is in progress for future reports:

- When the data is collected via SURDS, the department will be able to match to DVR data and provide a more complete data set of students receiving services through that division;
- As time progresses, fall-to-fall retention and graduation data will be available for this report;
- Conversations have already begun through this data collection process as well as through the Disability Services Advisory Committee as to how to improve outreach and services for and more complete reporting of SWDs; and
- While the SWD data is not a complete representation of the total number of SWDs in Colorado's IHEs, it has inspired conversations that would likely not have happened otherwise as to how to improve services and build a more inclusive culture for SWDs on college campuses.