



# University of Colorado

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Bruce D. Benson  
President

September 25, 2012

Mr. Hereford Percy, Chair  
Colorado Commission on Higher Education  
Department of Education  
1560 Broadway, Suite 1600  
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Chair Percy,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on CCHE's master plan for Colorado public higher education. I understand that the development of the master plan has been a long and involved process and I appreciate the time and effort that it has required.

In my earlier response to draft performance metrics proposed by the Commission, I affirmed CU's support for the primary goals of the master plan which are to increase educational attainment, improve student outcomes, and ensure affordability to all Coloradans. However, at that time, I also expressed concern that the master plan does not recognize quality, graduate or professional education, or research and its significant effect on economic development. These are central components of CU's mission, and therefore, I feel it is important to reiterate that concern.

I also feel it is important to re-state my unease with the idea that Colorado institutions are being asked to do more without seeing a corresponding increase in state support. State support for higher education was low even before the cuts experienced in recent years and our institutions are already among the most productive in the country. We urge the Commission to take this into consideration when we begin the process of defining metrics and setting targets for institutional performance contracts. Having said that, CU has always sought to reach out to more Coloradans and improve outcomes for students and will continue to do so.

I appreciate that the master plan includes broadly defined metrics, and understand that institutional metrics will be more clearly articulated in our institutional performance contract. I am confident that we will be able to agree on a set of metrics that address the goals of the master plan and responds to the need for public accountability, but also reflects the unique roles and missions of the University of Colorado campuses.

This letter expresses my broader thoughts about the Commission's draft master plan, in general. The document that follows offers a few comments in response to specific elements of the plan.

Sincerely,

Bruce D. Benson  
President

cc: Colorado Commission on Higher Education Members  
Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia

Attachment

## **University of Colorado Response to CCHE Draft Master Plan – August 25, 2012**

- Some institutions are already performing at a very high level on some metrics. We support language in the performance contract that calls for maintenance of effort when increased performance may not be a reasonable expectation.
- The appropriateness of the proposed metrics will largely depend on how they are defined in the institutional performance contracts.
- CCHE should ensure that measures of institutional efficiency or productivity aren't simply a reflection of the lack of state support. Goal 4 calls for increasing state funding – the measures that are intended to track progress toward this goal should be such that increases in state funding don't automatically result in a failure to meet efficiency targets.
- According to the plan, CCHE commits to annually requesting operating revenues to meet projected enrollment and inflationary increases, based upon the College Opportunity Fund stipend value established in 2005 and commits to requesting appropriations for state financial aid (p.16). No mention is made of Fee-for-Service funding. The master plan states that the focus on increasing undergraduate credentials “should not be interpreted to diminish the critical importance of graduate-level training” (p.11). Not addressing Fee-for-Service funding ignores the critical importance of support for graduate education at research universities.
- The plan states that “By December 1, 2012 and each year thereafter, review and, if necessary, modify the allocation method applied to state need-based financial aid to ensure that the allocation of such funds reinforces and supports the achievement of the state's performance goals.” (p. 16). This seems contrary to the intent of SB11-052, which excludes financial aid from performance funding calculations. What is more, it was a late addition to the plan and has not been discussed with us. Any review and modification of financial aid allocations should be done in collaboration with the institutions and take into account each of the goals outlined in statute.
- The plan states that “On December 1, 2013 and once every three years thereafter, the CCHE will evaluate the current and projected student and workforce demand for postsecondary education, by type and level, and the roles and missions, locations, and service areas of existing public colleges and universities...” (p. 17). An evaluation every three years seems excessive. Institutions cannot respond to changes in role and mission that could potentially occur every few years. Also, any review of institutional roles and missions should be conducted in partnership with the institutions – the plan should indicate this.
- Where statute or statutory authority is mentioned, we recommend including citations.