Given that…

Between 2008 and 2018, Colorado will create 609,000 job vacancies—both from new jobs and from job openings due to retirement—requiring postsecondary credentials; [1]

SHEEO has estimated that to stay economically competitive and meet workforce needs, degree attainment in Colorado will have to increase from 47% to at least 55% by 2025 – nearly a quarter million more than projected under current practices;

Between now and 2020, the state population is expected to increase from 5.2 million to 6.2 million, an approximate 19% increase; during that same time, the Latino population will grow from 993 thousand to 1.3 million, a 28% change;[2]

And that in Colorado the percentage of *white* Coloradans between the ages of 25 and 44 with an associate's degree or higher is 52.4%; the percentage of minority Coloradans between the ages of 25 and 44 with an associate's degree or higher is 24.8%. The percentage of Latinos with an associates degree or higher is 16.6%.[3]

With our current system of public higher education:

A relatively large percentage of students are being educated at the research/selective level and at community colleges;

Institutions have little or no incentive to graduate a students;

A growing percentage of the population is not being served by the system, either because they are not going to college or not getting a degree.

At 4-year institutions:

- 30.1% of students graduate within 4 years (57.7% within 6 years)
- 32.5% of white students, 18.9% of Hispanics (60.7% whites within 6 years, 44.7% Hispanics)
- 32.2% of non-Pell students, 20.1% of Pell (60.2% of non-Pell, 45.7% of Pell)

At 2-year institutions:

- 23.3% of students graduate within 2 years
- 25.7% of white students; 20.2% of Hispanics
- 24.7% Pell students, 19.5% of non-Pell (varies across institutions, with some graduating a higher percentage of Pell than non-Pell)

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[1] (Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs… Georgetown, June 2010)

[2] Demographers office

[3] DHE/CCHE paper from 2007 Census Bureau American Community Survey estimates

We need a system that will (it's in the state's interest to):

Maintain a high quality research system

Get a higher percentage of students, and in particular those currently being underserved, into college

Graduate more students within a reasonable time.

Possible Recommendations:

1a. Direct institutions on the population of students they are to serve using index scores
Currently, CCHE policy designates minimum index scores (based on a student's ACT and GPA) for each institution for admission of first time freshmen. In practice, the average of admitted student scores tends to be 15-20 points higher than the minimum, suggesting that institutions seek to admit students who are more qualified academically. This practice is understandable, as students who are better prepared academically are more likely to succeed and earn a degree, but skews the students away from institutions with a role admission to serve their preparation level. Directing students into an institution with an appropriate role and mission will serve to focus each institution to serve a certain population of students, and better balance student enrollment between four year and research institutions. Implementing minimum and maximum scores could also serve accountability by better distinguishing an institution's student population and the expected retention and graduation rates for that population. The idea ignores geographic disparity in the state (a rural high achieving student may not want to go to CU or CSU).

1b. Direct institutions on the population of students they are to serve by statutory change
Certain institutions, with likely candidates being CSU-P, UCCS, UNC, would be designated statutorily as institutions needing to serve the growing Hispanic and lower- to middle-income student population primarily in the Front Range.

1c. Direct institutions what population of students they serve through elaboration of each institution's role and mission
Given that each institution's statutory mission already includes serving Colorado's students, and that the CCHE has the statutory authority to "determine the role and mission of each state-supported institution of higher education within statutory guidelines," the CCHE can charge, e.g., UNC, CSU-Pueblo, and/or UCCS with serving the growing needs of urban Front Range Colorado.

2. Implement more of a competitive, market approach for institutions to attract and enroll students by abolishing admissions index scores altogether (though still maintaining statutory role and mission), and then provide incentive funding for institutions who enroll and graduate target population

students. Under this approach, institutions may or may not chose to focus on enrolling underrepresented students; those who do are rewarded.

3. Recognize that the system will have to accommodate (or provide opportunities for) academically underprepared students, and make remedial education an accepted part of the system. Possibly even designate a specific school to focus on remediation.

4. M**ore clearly delineate role and mission, in particular between the three tiers (research, baccalaureate and community college), but also within each group.** Virtually all states differentiate institutional missions based on program level and selectivity and have a means to curb mission creep—primarily through program approval. Common tiers are research university, comprehensive university, and community college. Differentiation is most often based on program level: authorization for *research-focused* PhDs being reserved for only a few major research universities, authorization for masters and baccalaureate programs (and a few professionally oriented doctoral programs) for comprehensive state universities, and limitation to associate degree programs for community and technical institutions. Authorization to grant the doctorate in professional fields (e.g., education) is commonly not equated with designation as a "research" university. The mission of a comprehensive university commonly includes offering masters degrees and sometimes (not not always) a limited number of professional doctoral programs. The focus of research/scholarship is on application and synthesis, but not basic research. In other words, "research university" is reserved for only those institutions that have a demonstrated record of attracting a significant level of external, competitive, peer-reviewed research funding.

5. Move toward a two-tiered system, in which community college offer four-year degrees and/or (more) four-year institutions are open access or modified open access. This recommendation is intended to provide more opportunities to students from lower income levels or other traditionally underrepresented populations. In the US, community colleges offering 4-year programs is exceptionally limited. In those cases where community colleges offer four-year programs, the programs are most likely limited to specialized degrees such as Bachelor's in Applied Technology. The demand about extending four-year degree authority to community colleges has been most intense in states with significant increases in demand that cannot be accommodated in the university sector (e.g., Arizona and Florida).

6. Provide financial incentives for all level of institutions to enroll and graduate traditionally under-represented students. The NGA Center for Best Practices advises states to experiment with tying a substantial percentage of funding—between 8 percent and 10 percent—to publicly reported outcomes. Historically, states' use of financial incentives has tended to be too small to influence institutional behavior. To ensure stability, states also need to create these incentives in statute.

6a. Use performance-based funding specifically to encourage more students to attend certain institutions, thus encouraging a shift from a "hourglass" to a "wedding cake."

7. Encourage more partnerships between two-year and four-year institutions. Far more common than having community colleges offer four-year degrees is for universities to offer four-year degree programs on community college campuses. The best practice in this arrangement is for states to have specific financing policies that provide incentives for these partnerships (policies for state funding of community colleges as "receive sites, policies for tuition revenue sharing between institutions, etc.).

8. Differentiate institutions by the level of "student services" that a student can reasonably expect to receive. This recommendation is intended to shift the focus to the student perspective, and to channel students into a level of school where they can reasonably expect to do well. Under this approach, community colleges would be expected to and would be financially rewarded for focusing increased resources on those student services.