

Colorado Department of Higher Education

Colorado P.E.A.K. Plan

Concept paper

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Colorado needs and deserves a top caliber system of higher education. To accept that premise is to align Colorado with the overwhelming number of states that have recognized the need to address higher education as a true “system.” A high quality system should be marked by accessibility, sustainability and success; as measured by Colorado’s families and businesses. Colorado cannot maintain such a system without developing a coherent master plan. In fact we know that some of our institutions, such as the CU Medical School, are at risk of failing because of internal and external pressures related to the lack of state funding.

A master plan should address several broad areas: 1) the state’s needs out of its system of higher education (“COHIED”); 2) the already known and identified challenges in COHIED; 3) the COHIED funding crisis; and, 4) the convergence with the K-12 system. To that end this concept paper suggests this process be labeled the P.E.A.K. Plan; P.E.A.K. being an acronym for the intent to address Purpose, Excellence, Access, and the K-12 Transition within the COHIED system.

The master plan must provide for clear accountability measures. First, Coloradans demand accountability and success for any commitment of tax dollars. Second, as costs rise, COHIED risks being seen solely as a private good; something that is left to individual families. Third, the last major overhaul of COHIED occurred in 2001-2002 with the implementation of COF. COF needs to be reviewed and a new master plan has to meet a higher threshold.

There is a significant body of existing work which should inform a master plan process. This includes master plans done by other states, the P-20 Council recommendations and the 2007 COHIED Summit outcomes. As such it would be inefficient and politically inadvisable to “start from scratch” or even to be perceived as doing the same. Therefore, the master planning process should be launched by a clear articulation of goals by the Governor. The concrete goals could include some mix of the following:

- doubling (or a defined percentage increase in) the number of postsecondary degrees and certificates (Colorado Promise)
- a defined increase in overall participation rate by post-secondary population (TX Master Plan)
- a defined and increased role for community colleges
- a percentage of degrees or certificates awarded in specified fields (e.g., new economy jobs, workforce ready professions.)

- targeted improvements in remediation and retention rates
- developing and adhering to some measure for accessibility.

Having clear goals, the master planning process can then focus on strategy, implementation and outreach. As already outlined, the process should include two co-chairs, a steering committee and several subcommittees. The co-chairs need to guide the process and maintain overall focus by all stakeholders. The steering committee should serve to receive input and recommendations from the subcommittees. Most importantly, the steering committee's main focus should be on setting the accountability measures for the recommended strategies. Finally, the subcommittees need to complete the in-depth analysis and policy work. The subcommittees could be structured as follows:

- I. **Purpose** – charged with defining state needs and looking at institutional missions. Successful recommendations should result in alignment between state/business needs and offered programs. Discussion items might include:
 - a. Higher Ed in 21st century, including demographics and projected need
 - b. Role of institutions
 - c. COHIED/business relationship
- II. **Excellence**- charged with addressing institutional process, analysis and research. Successful recommendations should result in improved and efficient analysis of COHIED programs and processes. Discussion items might include:
 - a. Governance/regulation
 - b. Capital construction process
 - c. Data gathering
- III. **Accessibility**- charged with addressing COHIED funding. Successful recommendations should result in a strategy for stabilizing and sustaining COHIED funding. Discussion items might include:
 - a. Revenues and expenditures
 - b. System wide efficiencies
 - c. Financial Aid
- IV. **K-12 Transition**- charged with addressing student access and success. Successful recommendations should result in decreased achievement gaps and clearer pathways for students of all interests and backgrounds. Discussion items might include:
 - a. Remediation
 - b. Retention
 - c. Admissions

In addition to these formal parts of the structure, the process could include ad hoc advisory groups. Such advisory groups could serve several purposes: 1) coalition building; 2) development of specific ideas with expertise not provided for in committees; and, 3) a “place at the table” for various constituencies. The steering group could establish these for the length of the process or on a more limited basis. Examples might include: Business Group; Minority Student Group; Non-traditional Learner Group.

To accomplish this task, the process will need adequate staffing. Projected staffing needs include a Project Director, a Budget and Data Analyst, and Administrative Support. Staff roles can be filled by existing staff from the Governor’s office, the Department of Higher Education and additional support from outside consultants. Adequate project funding has been identified in the budgets of the Governor’s office and the Department of Higher Education.

Attached is a proposed timeline in rough outline.

TIMELINE

November- Planning Meetings

December – Launch; Steering Group work

January – July – Work by Committees, Monthly updates to Steering Group

August – Draft Report to Steering Group

September – October Statewide tour and public input

November – Revisions by Steering group

December – Recommendations to Governor and CCHE

Launch Outline – Early December 2009

Length and format can be debated but the Launch likely must include the following elements:

- Charge and statement of goals by Governor and presentation of challenges
- Workplan by Steering Group Chairs and process going forward timeline