

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION Colorado Commission on Higher Education

NEWS RELEASE

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HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE SUBMITS FINAL REPORT TO GOVERNOR RITTER

Report Also Presented to Colorado Commission on Higher Education

Denver – Executive Director of the of the Colorado Department of Higher Education Rico Munn was joined today by Jim Lyons, co-chair of the Higher Education Strategic Planning steering committee and Jim Polsfut, chairman of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education – as well as other members of the committee – to present the committee's final report to Governor Ritter. The report was also presented to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education at its regular meeting this morning at the Colorado School of Mines. The committee's other co-chair, Dick Monfort, was traveling and unable to attend the press conference.

Munn said the report, entitled *The Degree Dividend: A Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Colorado*, articulates an aggressive agenda to fund and focus Colorado's system of higher education around the present and future economic and demographic realities.

"This plan details our need to increase our investment in, and ensure affordability for, postsecondary education; to reduce the ethnic achievement gap; to improve the educational

pipeline, and to identify systematic approaches that enhance and improve the educational pipeline," said Munn. "This committee understands the urgency with which we must address these needs, and I am very impressed with the dedication they showed throughout this process. The recommendations they came up with are right in line with Colorado's mission for higher education, and the report goes a long way toward the goal of providing access to all students in Colorado."

Lyons echoed Munn's sentiment, stressing the funding shortfall that higher education is facing, and the immediate need to address it.

"Higher education is in a deepening crisis – it's as simple as that," said Lyons. "We cannot expect our institutions of higher education to continue to provide quality education and produce the additional certificates and degrees needed for our economic future without additional resources. We must place the best interests of the state's system of higher ed first. In order to better serve the growing and changing demographic of our state, particularly our minority populations, we must strive harder to make our higher ed system more accessible and more successful. What we face is not only an economic issue, it's also a social and moral imperative. The future of our state depends on it."

Today's two presentations capped-off an 11-month effort, during which the committee and subcommittees developed a strategic planning initiative with the goal of: defining state higher educational needs and examining institutional missions; reviewing the governance and structure of the system of higher education; addressing higher education funding and; increasing and improving student access and success.

After completing a first draft of the plan, the committee traveled throughout the state and held public forums to provide information about the findings and recommendations of the Committee to the people of Colorado, and solicit comments from stakeholders.

The Steering Committee was comprised of policy, education and community leaders, and – after some initial meetings – four sub-committees were formed to focus on four areas: mission and governance; sustainability; accessibility; and pipeline. Each subcommittee was expanded to include representatives from universities, four-year schools, two-year schools and technical colleges, and over the past few months, heard from experts from the field of education to help the members create recommendations for the full committee.

Steering Committee members include:

Jim Lyons – Co-chair Senior Partner of Rothgerber Johnson & Lyons LLP

Dick Monfort – Co-chair Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the University of Northern

Colorado and part owner of the Colorado Rockies

Ray Baker Partner of Gold Crown Management Co. and Co-Founder/Director

of Gold Crown Foundation

John BlissFormer CFO for several Colorado CollegesTerry FarinaSenior Partner of Hoskin, Farina & Kampf, P.C.

Teresa Peña Member of the Denver Public School Board of Education

Russ George Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation

Jim Polsfut President of the Cordillera Foundation and Chairman of the

Colorado Commission on Higher Education

Member of the State Board of Community Colleges and

Occupational Education

Jane Rawlings Assistant Publisher of the Pueblo Chieftain

Alan Salazar Chief Policy and Political Advisor for U.S. Representative Mark

Udall

Greg Stevinson President of Denver West Reality, Inc. and President of Denver

West Management, Inc

Don Elliman (Ex-Officio) Chief Operating Officer for the State of Colorado

Rico Munn (Ex-Officio) Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Governor Ritter thanked the committee for their time and dedication, as well as the deliberation with which they made the recommendations detailed in the final report.

"This committee has laid out an aggressive but achievable strategic plan for making higher education more accessible, more affordable, more sustainable. And, they have laid out a plan that will build a stronger Colorado," said Ritter. "And we have to be aggressive – the stakes are too high not to be, because if there is one single key that unlocks the doors of opportunity, it's education."

The full report of the steering committee can be found on the Department of Higher Education's Website, http://highered.colorado.gov/.

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