

2025 Performance Report

The statewide strategic plan for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) advances the economic mobility of Colorado's learners and earners by aligning postsecondary talent development with industry and statewide needs. [Building Skills in an Evolving Economy](#) sets a bold vision to increase the number of learners being served by our postsecondary ecosystem by offering those students a path forward. The plan prioritizes educational pathways that are economically viable –those that lower costs for students, invest in proven learner support programs, and increase collaboration with employers. The plan also calls out promising practices by Colorado's colleges and universities aligned to each of the strategic pillars.

Elevating the Value of Postsecondary Education

To assist lawmakers, taxpayers, students and families in understanding the value of postsecondary education in Colorado, CDHE publishes an annual Return on Investment (ROI) Report of undergraduate degree programs and certificate programs offered at each state institution of higher education. The report summarizes various measures of ROI including the average time to completion, average cost for completion, average loan debt, and median 1-, 5-, and 10-year earnings outcomes for Colorado postsecondary completers. CDHE continues to publish updated data on wage outcomes for Colorado public postsecondary programs in its [interactive online tool](#), and CDHE's full [2025 ROI Report](#) with updated data on those measures (and more).

To further inform conversations around the value of postsecondary education, CDHE and CCHE convened a working group of Colorado stakeholders and national experts to advise on the most appropriate empirical model to estimate a Minimum Value Threshold (MVT) of postsecondary credentials in Colorado, and the best data elements to support this model. The working group proposed the following model to estimate the financial value of a postsecondary credential in Colorado:

Minimum Value Threshold = Incremental Earnings – Costs Specific to Higher Education

More details on the MVT development process can be found in the [summary document](#). More technical details can be found in the [technical documentation document](#).

The output of this model will support collaborative conversations between CDHE, CCHE, and institutions of higher education to better understand outcomes for programs and identify potential actions that all stakeholders can take to increase student success. While some programs may fall below the MVT threshold, they are essential to Colorado's workforce and societal well-being. These programs yield high social value, including improved public health outcomes, greater civic engagement, reduced reliance on social services, and stronger community cohesion. As Colorado navigates the uses of MVT data, the importance of these programs and the role they play in supporting Colorado's economy should be considered. Additionally, various stakeholders emphasized the non-financial aspects of value for higher education. While estimating such effects may require different methodologies (i.e., collecting survey data), exploring these outcomes will paint a more complete picture of higher education's value to Coloradans and the state.

Additional Measures of Postsecondary Success

CDHE continues to identify measures of postsecondary student success and build off past work to better elevate student stories, experiences, and perspectives. Aligned to these goals, CDHE has developed various dashboards displaying measures to better inform students, families, and policymakers. These dashboards include new data on [enrollment](#), [completion](#), [time and credits to degree](#), and [student debt](#). Much of the data contained in these dashboards can be disaggregated by institution of higher education, race/ethnicity, gender, first generation, and socioeconomic status.

Enrollment at Colorado public institutions of higher education reached **270,938 students in Fall 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and reaching the highest ever** (with significant growth in dual/Concurrent Enrollment). Completions at Colorado public institutions of higher education reached **71,191 in academic year (AY) 2023-2024, nearly surpassing pre-pandemic levels**.

Work continues to further embed work-based learning experiences in postsecondary education programs. [HB25-1186](#) creates a pilot program called the Work-Based Learning Consortium. Funded through gifts, grants, and donations, this initiative aligns the interests of institutions of higher education, employers, and students by **integrating experiential learning opportunities into college curricula**. Through permissive participation, the Department will work with institutions of higher education to **connect academic learning with real-world applications, focusing on career preparedness and skills development**, especially for marginalized student communities who may struggle to find paid internships.

Progress has been made to make postsecondary education more affordable for Colorado students. As shown in CDHE’s annual [ROI Report](#), debt among Colorado residents graduating from the state’s public institutions continues to be on a steady downward trend. **In the AY 2022-23, 43% of resident students graduating with a degree accrued student loan debt, compared to 52% with debt in 2018-19.**

Share of Colorado Public Institution Undergraduate Degree Completers with Debt, Academic Years 2018-19 to 2022-23			
Academic Year	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Total
2018-19	42.4%	55.4%	51.7%
2019-20	39.4%	54.7%	50.4%
2020-21	35.6%	52.9%	47.9%
2021-22	34.2%	50.0%	45.4%
2022-23	32.8%	47.9%	43.4%

The average loan debt for Colorado students graduating from a public institution has declined with average loan debt for bachelor’s degree graduates at \$24,700 and associate degree graduates at \$13,100 in AY 2022-23.

Average Debt for Colorado Public Institution Undergraduate Degree Completers, Academic Years 2018-19 to 2022-23, in Nominal Dollar Amounts			
Academic Year	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Total
2018-19	\$13,300	\$25,700	\$22,800
2019-20	\$13,200	\$25,700	\$22,900
2020-21	\$12,900	\$25,300	\$22,700
2021-22	\$12,900	\$25,200	\$22,500
2022-23	\$13,100	\$24,700	\$22,100

CDHE's Wildly Important Goals

CDHE has identified several Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) for FY 2025-26 and through June 2027. These goals are aligned with the Department's vision that all Coloradans will have an education beyond high school to pursue their dreams and improve our communities. Additional details and a visual representation of the Department's WIG progress are available on the [Governor's Dashboard](#).

WIG 1: Closing attainment equity gaps

- Increase the number of credential completions by low-income students from 15,378 to 17,120 by June 30, 2027.
- Increase the number of credential completions by students of color from 23,170 to 26,000 by June 30, 2027.

WIG 2: Workforce development initiatives

- Increase the percentage of public postsecondary programs that require a work-based learning component from 76% to 83% by June 30, 2027.

WIG 3: Increase postsecondary enrollment and success of high school graduates

- CDHE will increase the proportion of Colorado high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education from 49.9% to 60% by June 30, 2027
- CDHE will increase the proportion of Colorado high school students who attempted college credits or credentials while in high school from 42% to 52% by June 30, 2027.

WIG 4: Cost containment and affordability for learners

- Decrease the share of students graduating with debt from 43.4% to 33% by June 30, 2027.
- Decrease the average amount of debt per graduating student from \$21,000 to \$18,000 by June 30, 2027.