



Finish What You Started

Legislative Report

House Bill 21-1330

2024

Prepared and submitted by the
Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

Report to the Colorado General Assembly

Statute: 23-3.3-1006

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Legislative Reporting Requirements

Per 23-3.3-1006 (7)(a), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) is required to submit a legislative report to the joint budget committee and the education committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives or any successor committees by December 1. The report must summarize the reports received from the public institutions of higher education and must include:

- The amounts allocated and distributed to each public institution of higher education.
- The amount each institution spent in providing direct student financial assistance to eligible students and in providing services and support to eligible students and the types of direct student financial assistance and services and support provided.
- The number of eligible students who re-enrolled in the academic years in which each institution's student assistance plan was implemented.
- The postsecondary credentials are awarded to eligible students who received assistance through each institution's student assistance plan.
- Any additional information the board deems useful in determining the degree to which the money appropriated to the fund pursuant to section 23-3.3-1005 (6) was successfully spent to increase eligible student enrollment, persistence, and completion and decrease student debt.
 - The Board has not required additional metrics.

Program Overview

The Finish What You Started (FWYS) program is led by the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), a division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative received \$49 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to fund the Finish What You Started program. This program provides direct and indirect support to students, with \$46.55 million allocated to institutions and \$2.45 million to COSI for program administration. Direct support provides students with financial assistance through scholarships, grants, and other aid. Indirect support invests in their success by hiring staff to provide essential services like academic advising and career guidance. The program prioritizes individuals who experienced an economic loss due to the pandemic, undergraduate students, and in-state students who:

- Earned some postsecondary credits from a public or private higher education institution but did not complete a credential requiring thirty credits or more before deciding not to enroll for two or more consecutive semesters, or;
- Were admitted to a public institution of higher education as a first-time student for the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 academic year but did not enroll at any institution for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The statute required the COSI Advisory Board (The Board) to allocate the funds appropriated following a specific allocation formula:

- 50% based on each institution's headcount enrollment for the 2019-2020 academic year of undergraduate, in-state students whose expected family contribution did not exceed 250% of Pell eligibility; and
- 50% based on each institution's full-time equivalent enrollment for the 2019-2020 academic year of undergraduate, in-state students whose expected family contribution did not exceed 250% of Pell eligibility.

The statute also allowed the board to adopt rules that identify additional criteria for allocating the money considering characteristics of the public institutions of higher education, including location in a rural area of the state, total headcount enrollment, and characteristics unique to area technical colleges.

Program Progress

Federal funding provided COSI with an opportunity to utilize its proven model of financial and student support services to assist Colorado public institutions and expand and create programming focused on addressing equity gaps, significant enrollment declines, high job loss rates, continuing unemployment, and addressing the disruption to the workforce caused by the pandemic. In 2023-2024, 30 public institutions of higher education participated in the program.

As highlighted below, the program's third year saw a significant increase in participation and spending.

- Through year three, over \$27M has been distributed to the institutions.
- Institutions spent almost \$12 million this year, with most of the funds spent on direct financial support to students.
- The cumulative number of students served by the program has steadily grown over the past three years. Institutions reported serving 1,122 new students this year, 32% more than previous years.
- This year, 945 completions were reported, marking a significant increase of 129% compared to previous years.

Progress is a testament to the perseverance and dedication of the state, CDHE, and institutions in supporting underserved populations and those most impacted by the pandemic in pursuing higher education and receiving credentials. These funds have been effectively mobilized through partnerships between the state, CDHE, and institutions to revitalize the workforce in a post-pandemic Colorado.

Statutory Program Changes

The 2024-25 legislative session included several bills that impacted the operations of the Finish What You Started Program. House Bill 24-1465 amended the eligibility criteria for the program. As of the academic year 2024-25, eligible students include ongoing students or those currently participating in the program, those who participated in the program from 2021-2024 but did not complete it, and new students recruited in 2023-2024.

Refinance Federal Coronavirus Recovery Funds, House Bill 24-1466 transitions the remaining SLFRF to General Funds. This technical bill did not impact the program's operation or award amounts. The bill also decreased COSI funds from \$49 million to \$39 million. The program was allocated \$10,463,439 in general funds in lieu of SLFRF for the remaining two years of the program.

Program Data

This section contains data that meets the legislative reporting requirements and details the allocations and disbursements, spending, students served, and completions.

Amount Allocated and Distributed

Table 1 presents the total grant term allocation provided through HB21-1330 to the 30 participating institutions. Additionally, the table outlines the distribution for year three (FY 2023-2024) and the cumulative total disbursed through the end of year three.

TABLE 1: Finish What You Started Allocations and Distributions, by Institution of Higher Education

Institution	Grant Term Allocation	Year Three Distribution (FY 2023-2024)	Total Disbursed through Year Three (FY 2022 to 2024)
Adams State University	\$678,546.00	\$ 112,636.84	\$507,372.84
Aims Community College	\$1,250,756.00	\$312,689.00	\$938,067.00
Arapahoe Community College	\$1,111,149.00	\$391,752.63	\$999,700.19
Colorado Mesa University	\$2,118,620.00	\$529,729.01	\$1,942,141.01
Colorado Mountain College	\$983,646.00	\$ -	\$655,764.00
Colorado Northwestern Community College	\$246,845.00	\$ -	\$116,000.00
Colorado State University	\$3,655,937.00	\$846,300.00	\$2,138,672.00
Colorado State University Global	\$784,395.00	\$323,534.00	\$323,534.00
Colorado State University-Pueblo	\$1,015,124.00	\$114,406.50	\$443,091.50
Community College of Aurora	\$1,318,414.00	\$237,543.48	\$779,146.48
Community College of Denver	\$2,002,754.00	\$205,111.00	\$1,291,914.00
Emily Griffith Technical College	\$705,769.00	\$ -	\$677,833.00
Fort Lewis University	\$552,344.00	\$155,792.00	\$394,340.00

Front Range Community College	\$3,206,928.00	\$532,990.50	\$1,643,681.50
Lamar Community College	\$251,898.00	\$91,849.25	\$185,279.75
Metropolitan State University of Denver	\$5,712,650.00	\$1,019,529.44	\$2,261,848.44
Morgan Community College	\$344,391.00	\$50,000.00	\$222,195.50
Northeastern Junior College	\$353,211.00	\$117,737.00	\$353,211.00
Otero College	\$422,134.00	\$123,040.00	\$422,134.00
Pickens Technical College	\$626,982.00	\$143,207.67	\$340,566.67
Pikes Peak State College	\$3,728,872.00	\$519,338.00	\$1,868,884.00
Pueblo Community College	\$1,430,926.00	\$397,299.00	\$819,580.00
Red Rocks Community College	\$1,328,254.00	\$332,164.00	\$994,150.00
Technical College of the Rockies	\$191,590.00	\$50,500.00	\$151,500.00
Trinidad Community College	\$567,165.00	\$ -	\$283,582.50
University of Colorado Boulder	\$3,122,075.00	\$611,441.48	\$1,866,002.48
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	\$2,398,588.00	\$601,667.00	\$1,055,255.00
University of Colorado Denver	\$3,205,271.00	\$ 527,814.75	\$1,938,041.75
University of Northern Colorado	\$2,024,812.00	\$674,937.00	\$2,024,812.00
Western Colorado University	\$530,269.00	\$75,107.50	\$356,897.50
Total	\$45,870,315.00	\$9,098,177.05	\$27,995,198.11

2023-2024 Spend

Statute requires that institutions disclose the distribution of funds between direct student financial support (scholarships, educational expenses, and incentives) and indirect support (personnel, programming, and marketing). According to Table 2, most institutions prioritized direct support in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

TABLE 2: Finish What You Started State Funds Spent on Financial and Student Supports (FY 2023-2024)

By Institution of Higher Education

Institution	Indirect Support (Student Supports)	Direct Support (Financial Support)	Direct Support Percentage (Financial Support)	Total
Adams State University	\$35,551.08	\$254,388.40	88%	\$289,939.48
Aims Community College	\$100,975.79	\$249,694.00	71%	\$350,669.79

Arapahoe Community College	\$76,468.09	\$222,549.10	74%	\$299,017.19
Colorado Mesa University	\$57,170.75	\$481,231.99	89%	\$538,402.74
Colorado Mountain College	\$63,256.98	\$109,649.00	63%	\$172,905.98
Colorado Northwestern Community College	\$-	\$13,606.37	100%	\$13,606.37
Colorado State University	\$132,119.48	\$770,728.33	85%	\$902,847.81
Colorado State University-Global	\$5,700.00	\$293,897.00	98%	\$299,597.00
Colorado State University-Pueblo	\$31,688.17	\$147,641.58	82%	\$179,329.75
Community College of Aurora	\$112,353.31	\$343,497.43	75%	\$455,850.74
Community College of Denver	\$105,117.42	\$566,091.07	84%	\$671,208.49
Emily Griffith Technical College	\$40,106.91	\$143,022.00	78%	\$183,128.91
Fort Lewis University	\$58,422.38	\$104,000.00	64%	\$162,422.38
Front Range Community College	\$174,694.27	\$605,735.14	78%	\$780,429.41
Lamar Community College	\$22,180.57	\$76,445.20	78%	\$98,625.77
Metropolitan State University of Denver	\$478,834.25	\$581,000.00	55%	\$1,059,834.25
Morgan Community College	\$15,056.48	\$124,955.84	89%	\$140,012.32
Northeastern Junior College	\$39,545.04	\$79,729.91	67%	\$119,274.95
Otero College	\$84,360.50	\$57,865.10	41%	\$142,225.60
Pickens Technical College	\$25,341.31	\$237,189.70	90%	\$262,531.01
Pikes Peak State College	\$198,372.67	\$854,645.30	81%	\$1,053,017.97
Pueblo Community College	\$78,826.16	\$305,359.00	79%	\$384,185.16
Red Rocks Community College	\$62,076.19	\$439,635.76	88%	\$501,711.95
Technical College of the Rockies	\$22,993.95	\$33,700.00	59%	\$56,693.95
Trinidad Community College	\$54,087.18	\$127,691.00	70%	\$181,778.18
University of Colorado Boulder	\$242,196.27	\$526,950.00	69%	\$769,146.27
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	\$-	\$623,449.00	100%	\$623,449.00
University of Colorado Denver	\$271,379.19	\$376,706.84	58%	\$648,086.03
University of Northern Colorado	\$216,779.86	\$325,690.00	60%	\$542,469.86
Western Colorado University	\$47,741.04	\$96,640.00	67%	\$144,381.04
	\$2,853,395.29	\$9,173,384.06	76%	\$12,026,779.35
	Total Indirect Spent	Total Direct Spent	Direct Support Percentage	Total Spent

Students Served

As shown in Table 3, the number of new students enrolled in FY 2023-2024 and the cumulative number of students served by the program has steadily grown over the past three years. Over the three years, more than 4,600 students have been reached. This year, 1,122 new students were served, 32% more than in previous years.

TABLE 3: Finish What You Started Students Served (FY 2022-2024), by Institution of Higher Education

Institution	New Students (FY 2023-2024)	Cumulative Students Served (FY 2022-2024)
Adams State University	62	114
Aims Community College	11	171
Arapahoe Community College	<10*	145
Colorado Mesa University	<10*	219
Colorado Mountain College	9	120
Colorado Northwestern Community College	<10*	12
Colorado State University	64	258
Colorado State University-Global	76	77
Colorado State University-Pueblo	15	103
Community College of Aurora	<10*	143
Community College of Denver	132	409
Emily Griffith Technical College	21	128
Fort Lewis University	<10*	49
Front Range Community College	45	437
Lamar Community College	23	36
Metropolitan State University of Denver	104	395
Morgan Community College	38	58
Northeastern Junior College	16	75
Otero College	13	76
Pickens Technical College	88	230
Pikes Peak State College	139	369
Pueblo Community College	42	195
Red Rocks Community College	50	129
Technical College of the Rockies	<10*	45
Trinidad Community College	27	62
University of Colorado Boulder	44	185
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	42	81
University of Colorado Denver	18	202
University of Northern Colorado	<10*	113
Western Colorado University	10	45
Total	1,122	4,681

Note: Student counts of less than 10 are suppressed to protect student privacy and noted with an asterisk.

Credential Completion

Table 4 presents the FY 2023-2024 and cumulative number of completions through year three. This year, 945 completions were reported, marking a significant increase of 129% compared to previous years.

TABLE 4: Finish What You Started Credential Completion (FY 2022-2024), by Institution of Higher Education

Institution	Credential Completion (FY 2023-2024)	Cumulative Credential Completion (FY 2022-2024)
Adams State University	11	23
Aims Community College	35	61
Arapahoe Community College	<10*	28
Colorado Mesa University	33	106
Colorado Mountain College	18	44
Colorado Northwestern Community College	<10*	<10*
Colorado State University	46	74
Colorado State University-Global	<10*	<10*
Colorado State University-Pueblo	<10*	15
Community College of Aurora	23	45
Community College of Denver	65	94
Emily Griffith Technical College	42	88
Fort Lewis University	18	24
Front Range Community College	94	150
Lamar Community College	21	26
Metropolitan State University of Denver	53	70
Morgan Community College	<10*	10
Northeastern Junior College	32	41
Otero College	27	46
Pickens Technical College	96	169
Pikes Peak State College	42	78
Pueblo Community College	92	128
Red Rocks Community College	18	27
Technical College of the Rockies	16	35
Trinidad Community College	<10*	32
University of Colorado Boulder	31	70
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs	24	28

University of Colorado Denver	29	65
University of Northern Colorado	43	87
Western Colorado University	<10*	<10*
Total	945	1,677

Note: Student counts of less than 10 are suppressed to protect student privacy and noted with an asterisk.

Conclusion

The federal funding provided to COSI has been a powerful catalyst for change, empowering Colorado's public institutions and their students. The program has significantly impacted student success through the strategic allocation of funds and innovative support services.

The program's third year saw remarkable growth, with 30 participating institutions, over \$11 million distributed, and 945 degree or credential completions. By providing direct financial aid and comprehensive support, the program has helped students overcome obstacles and secure brighter futures.

Key achievements of the program include:

- **Increased Student Enrollment:** Finish What You Started has successfully incentivized students to return to college or enroll for the first time, leading to increased enrollment numbers across participating institutions.
- **Student Support Services:** The program hires student support staff (indirect support) to provide critical support services, which have been essential in helping students navigate the challenges of higher education and increase enrollment and completion.
- **Increased Credential Attainment:** The program has supported more students in completing their degrees or certificates.

While the program has faced challenges, it has demonstrated its resilience and effectiveness. As the program enters its final two years, it is crucial to maintain its focus on supporting students and institutions, particularly those serving underserved populations. By doing so, Colorado can ensure a skilled workforce and a brighter future for all its citizens.