



COLORADO

Department of
Higher Education

Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program

Legislative Report Senate Bill 23-149



Youth Mentorship SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



COLORADO
Colorado Opportunity
Scholarship Initiative

2025

The Colorado Department of Higher Education
Report to the Colorado General Assembly

Statute: 23-3.3-1010

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE), under its own authority and through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), oversees and coordinates policy for 31 public institutions of higher education (including community colleges, independent local district colleges and local area technical colleges) and authorizes and regulates private colleges, universities and occupational schools.

Mission – We support students, advocate and develop policies to maximize higher education opportunities for all.

Vision – All Coloradans will have an education beyond high school to pursue their dreams and improve our communities.



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under the Executive Leadership of Dr. Angie Paccione
Pursuant to the statutory authority of 23-3.3-1010

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Executive Summary

Pursuant to C.R.S. 23-3.3-1010 (8)(b), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) is required to submit an annual report to the education committees of the Colorado General Assembly by December 1, detailing the implementation and outcomes of the Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program (YMSP) for the preceding fiscal year.

The YMSP is a pilot initiative designed to support student success and community engagement by providing financial aid to students attending Colorado public institutions of higher education in exchange for mentoring high-priority youth populations, including LGBTQIA individuals, youth with disabilities, youth of color, and justice-involved youth. The program is funded with a \$100,000 allocation, with full expenditure anticipated by June 30, 2026.

In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, the program demonstrated significant growth and impact:

- Participation: 18 student mentors served, marking a 260% increase from the prior year.
- Scholarship Disbursement: \$40,000 disbursed to student mentors.
- Outcomes: Eight student mentors completed credentials, representing a 700% increase in completions.

These outcomes reflect the program’s dual success in supporting student persistence and academic achievement while fostering meaningful mentorship relationships with underserved youth. As YMSP moves toward its final year, CDHE continues to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in advancing student success.

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Introduction

Program Overview

The Youth Mentorship Assistance Grant Pilot Program, also known as the Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program (YMSP), is led by the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), a division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). This program is designed to provide scholarships to students who offer mentorship services to cover the cost of higher education. In fiscal year 2023-2024, the state appropriated \$100,000 to be used through June 30, 2027, with 100% of the funds allocated for student scholarships.

Table 1: Program Overview

Category	Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program Description
Intended Applicant	Applicants include youth mentorship organizations focused on serving one or more of the following communities: - a youth mentorship organization for youth who identify as LGBTQIA - a youth mentorship organization for youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability; - a youth mentorship organization for youth of color; - a youth mentorship organization for youth who are justice-involved.
Program	The Youth Mentorship Scholarship program utilizes \$100,000 in state funds to provide grants to youth mentorship organizations. The funds are used as payments for service to the student in the form of scholarships, which are paid directly to the public institution of higher education at the end of each semester.
Program Goal	The program provides financial assistance to students who provide mentorship services to support with the cost of the student's attendance at a public institution of higher education.

Source: YMSP Request for Proposal and Statute (C.R.S. 23-3.3-1010)

Grant Awards

COSI awards grants of up to \$25,000 per youth mentorship organization to be spent over two years. The organization must use grant funds to provide scholarships to students. Funded applicants will be eligible for continued funding in the subsequent years of the grant cycle after successfully demonstrating the following:

- Submission of all required evaluation materials.
- Adequate progress toward successfully meeting annual objectives; and
- Completed annual report to demonstrate fidelity to proceed in subsequent years.

Use of Funds

- Organizations provide scholarships of up to \$2,500 per student per year.
- Scholarships are provided to the student mentor in exchange for mentorship services provided.
- Scholarships must be used to cover the cost of attendance and must be paid directly to the institution of higher education.
- The scholarship must be paid each fall and spring semester, and only once hours have been confirmed by the mentorship organization will the scholarship be paid, which may occur at the end of the semester.
- Scholarships are not intended to supplant federal, state, local or non-federal funds. Scholarships should be designed to close the affordability gap for students pursuing postsecondary credentials.

Eligible Student-Mentor Criteria

- Complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) or Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) application annually.
- Meet the financial need threshold of up to 0%-250% of Pell eligibility.
- Undergraduate student.
- Colorado residents for tuition purposes (including ASSET students).

- Attending public area technical colleges, community colleges, four-year institutions of higher education and research institutions in Colorado.
- Satisfy all eligibility requirements necessary to be a student mentor through the approved mentorship organization, including completing the fingerprint-based criminal history record check.
- Actively participate in the youth mentorship organization and provide student mentor services.
- Focus on student-mentors who are at least a sophomore level.

Legislative Reporting Requirements

C.R.S. 23-3.3-1010 (8)(b) requires that on or before December 1 each year, the department submit a report to the education committees of the Senate and House of Representatives concerning the Youth Mentorship Scholarship program in the preceding state fiscal year. At a minimum, the report must include:

- Locations of approved youth mentorship organizations, the services provided, demographic information of the mentees, and a summary of the program's impact on the mentees served.
- Number of eligible student mentors, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender identity, and the public institution they attended.
- Amount of money received by the mentor organization, disaggregated by payments to the public institutions of higher education.
- If available, the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program who continued enrollment in the qualified public institution of higher education in a subsequent term, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity.
- If available, the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program and graduated from a qualified public institution of higher education, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity.

Program Progress

Beginning July 1, 2024, the program awarded the full \$100,000 allocation across all focus areas, supporting programs through June 30, 2026, and benefiting four organizations. In fiscal year 2023-2024, \$10,000 was disbursed, and in fiscal year 2024-2025, \$40,000 was disbursed. The programs will spend their remaining allocations in 2025-2026, which total \$50,000. This marked the second year of funding for College Access Navigators Inc with the focus of youth of color and Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education, who focus on youth who have physical, mental, or developmental disabilities and the first year of funding for Larimer County Partners, focusing on youth who are justice-involved, and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, focusing on youth who identify as LGBTQIA.

Midway through the year, the Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education, focusing on youth with disabilities, terminated its agreement, making \$15,000 in funds available. After an application process and board approval in May 2025, the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs Disability Services program was awarded \$5,000. The program focuses on youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability and is scheduled to launch in the fall of 2025. It will not have data to report until June 2026. The remaining \$10,000 is pending final board approval in November 2025.

Program Data

This section contains data that meets the legislative reporting requirements. The organizations provide the data through their 2024-2025 annual reports.

Grantee Information and Program Impacts

Table 2 offers a detailed overview of the program's success, including each awarded program's location, the services provided, the demographics of the participants, and a summary of its positive effects on the mentees served. It features two new grantees from the previous year: Larimer County Partners and the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs.

Table 2: Youth Mentor Scholarships Program Grantee Information and Program Impacts

Grantee	Community Served	Area of Service	Mentee Demographics	Program Impact
College Access Navigators Inc	Youth of color	Fort Morgan	Students in high school and early college, with a focus on first-generation, immigrant and English-learning students	Mentees acknowledged heightened confidence in their ability to achieve future goals due to their mentor's guidance. Mentors emphasized the program's significance in fostering a supportive and inclusive community, with mentors feeling less isolated and happier as part of a community that "feels like a supportive village."
Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education	Youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability	Metro area, Pikes Peak	Pairs high school seniors with intellectual disabilities with college or university students with intellectual disabilities who are enrolled at one of IN's IHE campuses	High school staff shared how successful mentorship was for their students and how much interest in college it generated among students who were not previously considering postsecondary education. COSI funding allowed the students to complete their junior year in financial good standing, allowing them to return to campus in the fall of 2025. This grantee terminated due to being unable to collect the student-level data necessary for this grant, primarily because of the student population this grant focuses on.
Larimer County Partners	Youth who are justice involved	Larimer and Weld County	Youth must be referred by a professional in the following communities: Ft. Collins, Loveland, Greeley, Estes Park.	Mentors who are students at Colorado State University and meet all COSI criteria were invited to apply for our scholarship. Those

Grantee	Community Served	Area of Service	Mentee Demographics	Program Impact
				who received the scholarship were paired with at least one youth, whom they mentored for one hour per week for the duration of the school year. Student mentors and mentees met at the youth school. Student mentors documented their work with mentees in the form of confidential case notes. Student mentors utilized weekly case management contacts with Partners program staff. Student mentors received scholarship funds at the end of each semester after their work was verified.
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs	Youth who identify as LGBTQIA	El Paso, Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln, Crowley, Pueblo, Fremont, Teller, and Park Counties	Students who identify as LGBTQIA, people of color, and first-generation to college	Students attend bi-weekly mentor check-in and holistic development, attend required meetings with academic advisor once per semester, attend required individual meetings with MOSAIC director or MOSAIC support specialist once per semester, and required attendance at one MOSAIC alumni mixer once per semester.
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs	Youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability	El Paso, Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln, Crowley, Pueblo, Fremont,	Students who offer mentorship services that benefit youth who have physical, mental, or developmental disabilities	This program was approved in May 2025 and will launch in Fall 2025, with its first report due in June 2026.

Grantee	Community Served	Area of Service	Mentee Demographics	Program Impact
		Teller, and Park Counties		

Total Amount Awarded and Distributed

Table 3 outlines the participating organizations, program launch dates, total awards, annual disbursements, and the amounts each grantee disbursed to institutions for student scholarships. In FY 2024–2025, an additional \$40,000 was disbursed to grantees, in addition to the \$10,000 disbursed in FY 2023–2024. This leaves \$50,000 remaining for disbursement in FY 2025–2026. The Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education had \$2,000 in unspent funds from the 2023-2024 fiscal year, which was distributed to students during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Table 3: Grant Awards and Disbursements by Organization 2024-2025

Grantee	Program Launch	Total Award	Disbursement to Organizations in 2024-2025	Scholarship Amounts to IHEs for Student Mentorship Services in 2024-2025
College Access Navigators Inc	Spring 2024	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Initiative for Inclusive Higher Education (Grant Terminated)	Spring 2024	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$7,000
Larimer County Partners	Fall 2024	\$25,000	\$12,500	\$12,500
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (Youth who identify as LGBTQIA)	Fall 2024	\$25,000	\$12,500	\$11,553.00

Grantee	Program Launch	Total Award	Disbursement to Organizations in 2024-2025	Scholarship Amounts to IHEs for Student Mentorship Services in 2024-2025
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (Youth who have a physical, mental, or developmental disability)	Fall 2025	\$5,000	\$0	\$0
Total		\$90,000	\$40,000	\$41,053

Source: 2024-2025 Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program Annual Reports

Students Served

In 2023-2024, the program launched in spring 2024 with two organizations. From July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, four organizations participated, serving a total of 18 students. This represents a 260% increase over participation in 2023-2024 (<10). The students attended Adams State University, Arapahoe Community College, Colorado State University, Metropolitan State University of Denver, the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, and the University of Northern Colorado. The statute requires CDHE to report disaggregated data. CDHE requires a minimum of 10 students in the data set so personally identifiable information is not compromised. Given the limited number of students in the cohort, it is essential to prioritize data privacy. While disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and gender identity can provide valuable insights, balancing this with protecting individual privacy is crucial. Disaggregated data will be provided in future reports, when there is sufficient program participation.

Persistence

The bill states that if available, the report should include the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program who continued enrollment in the qualified public institution of higher education in a subsequent term, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender identity. While disaggregating data by race, ethnicity and gender identity can provide valuable insights, balancing this with protecting individual privacy is crucial. In future years, this information will be provided when the number of participating students is large enough that student privacy can be ensured.

Completion

In 2023-2024, the program launched in spring 2024 with two organizations. In 2024-2025, four organizations participated, with a total of eight students completing their credentials- a 700% increase over spring 2024. The bill requests data on completion outlining the number of eligible student mentors who participated in the program and graduated from a qualified public institution of higher education, reported for the program as a whole and for each institution, in total and disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender identity. The Department requires a minimum of 10 students in the data set so personally identifiable information is not compromised. Given the limited number of students in the initial cohort, it is essential to prioritize data privacy. While disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and gender identity can provide valuable insights, balancing this with protecting individual privacy is crucial. In future years, this information will be provided when the number of participating students is enough that student privacy can be ensured.

Conclusion

The Youth Mentorship Scholarship Program, enacted through SB23-149, has demonstrated strong initial results in fostering student success. The program began by awarding \$100,000 in grants to four organizations. As of fall 2024, two of the original programs continued their work while two new programs were launched, serving a total of 18 students. A balance of \$10,000 remains available, and the board will approve the remaining funds in November 2025 for a current YMSP grantee. The new

programming at UCCS was approved in May and begins in fall 2025. The remaining \$50,000 is set to be spent in 2025-2026. All four focus areas are expected to be fully operational in fiscal year 2025-2026.

Key Accomplishments:

- **Expansion of Services:** The program successfully launched two new mentorship initiatives in fall 2024.
- **Student Reach:** In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the program served a total of 18 student mentors across all four organizations, an increase of 260% from 2023-2024.
- **Scholarship Disbursements:** The mentorship organizations disbursed a total of \$41,053 in scholarships to compensate the student mentors for their services.
- **Mentee Impact:** The report highlights the positive impact on mentees, noting that the program fostered increased confidence, generated interest in college among high school students and helped create a supportive community for mentors and mentees.
- **Student Success:** Eight students successfully earned credentials from four partner organizations, an increase of 700% from 2023-2024. This is a testament to the program's impact and the students' strong academic achievement.