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Education commissioner presents draft strategic plan for commission feedback

Two new reports highlight solutions to address high cost of college textbooks and educator preparation enrollment, completion and effectiveness

DENVER – Dec. 7, 2017: At its monthly meeting held today at the University of Denver, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) received a presentation from Education Commissioner Katy Anthes on the draft Colorado Department of Education (CDE) strategic plan recently presented to legislators. CCHE also heard findings from two key statewide reports on open educational resources and educator preparation.

Colorado Department of Education Draft Strategic Plan

Commissioner Anthes outlined the four goals in the CDE plan, one being that by 2022, 66 percent of students will earn a postsecondary credential, degree or certificate after high school, which mirrors the CCHE goal that by 2025, 66 percent of adults will earn a post-high school certificate or degree. Commissioners discussed the alignment between the CDE plan and the CCHE master plan [Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development](#). They also stressed the need for a strong and continued partnership with K-12 to successfully reach the shared goals of increasing talent development and erasing gaps in Colorado. A key initiative in the CDE plan addresses expanding high school options to ensure all students are ready for college and/or living-wage jobs.

Open Educational Resources Report

The Open Educational Resources (OER) Council’s report, submitted to the Joint Budget Committee and Education Committee, found increased adoption of freely available online teaching and learning materials could significantly benefit students through cost savings, improved learning and higher student retention.

To drive OER use, the report recommends launching a Colorado OER Initiative that would consist of three main components: structure and staffing at the state level, knowledge-sharing and community-building activities among institutions and a grant program to fund expanded OER initiatives.

Contained in digital media collections from around the world, OER includes materials such as full courses, lectures, quizzes, classroom activities, books, pedagogical materials and many other assets accessible to students, instructors and self-learners.

“The judicious use of open educational resources has multiple benefits,” said Deborah Keyek-Franssen, associate vice president for digital education and engagement at the University of Colorado and vice chair of the OER Council. “In addition to lowering cost of attendance and ensuring access to course materials for all students on the first day of classes, regardless of their individual financial circumstances, use of OER, and of the pedagogical practices that are possible with OER, can lead to rich and effective learning experiences.”

[Senate Bill 17-258](#), Using Open Educational Resources In Higher Education, established the OER Council to evaluate the use of academic materials by Colorado’s public institutions of higher education. The bill was signed by Gov. John Hickenlooper in May.

In collaboration with the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), the OER Council conducted a statewide survey of the public and all public institutions of higher education to inform the OER report submitted to the legislature. The 14-member OER council is comprised of faculty, librarians and administrators representing two-year and four-year institutions of higher education as well as the Colorado Departments of Education and Higher Education.

[Learn more about the OER Council](#) and [view the report](#).

Educator Preparation Report

The 2017 Educator Preparation Report found another slight drop in traditional education preparation program enrollment but an 8 percent increase in individuals completing college and university education preparation programs during the 2016-17 academic year. This increase to 2,674 completers counters a seven-year decline.

In terms of content areas, more candidates were licensed in special education and culturally and linguistically diverse education, while completion in math and world languages dropped 1 percent and 16 percent respectively.

The enrollment decline in traditional education preparation programs to 9,789 at Colorado colleges and universities appears to be stabilizing: enrollment has varied only 1 percent over the last three years.

The [report](#), submitted annually to the Joint Education Committee of the General Assembly and required by law, is drafted by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

Findings within the report mirror those found in CDHE and CDE's [Teacher Shortages Across the Nation and Colorado: Similar Issues, Varying Magnitudes](#), which explored national and state trends in educator preparation program enrollment, completion and teacher retention.

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