



To meet workforce demands, continue robust economic growth and ensure every Coloradan has an opportunity to pursue their dreams, we must expand educational opportunity and erase equity gaps. But these goals are only achievable if **all Coloradans can afford higher education**, whether they pursue a certificate, degree or credential. This imperative inspired the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to establish an affordability framework that will drive a **bold, student-first policy agenda**.

### Affordability Framework



A postsecondary education is affordable when all Coloradans can access financial resources that cover the costs of earning a credential of their choice, and institutions, the state, the federal government, students and families work together to put that opportunity in reach. On top of federal, state, and institutional aid, resources may include student and family contributions, including savings; private grants and scholarships; income from reasonable work expectations while in school; and a manageable debt load relative to the value of the student's course of study and overall higher education experience. While students and families can make choices that impact what they pay, the decisions and policies of institutions, the state, and federal government have a responsibility to contain costs.

### Guiding Principles



To reduce the burden on students, Colorado institutions commit to containing costs and operating as efficiently as possible while maintaining quality.



Multiple postsecondary pathways should be accessible to all Coloradans regardless of age, income, race and zip code.



Student debt can be a tool to achieve affordability, depending on total cost of credential, student loan terms and potential future earnings.



Student's educational choices—such as course selection in college, prior learning, and participation in precollegiate programs like Concurrent Enrollment, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate—can reduce the cost and time it takes to earn a credential.



State investment in higher education provides Coloradans access to the skills and knowledge they need to thrive, yielding social, civic and economic returns for our state and advancing the public good.

### Definitions

#### Cost

The listed cost to attend a higher education program, commonly referred to as the "sticker price." This includes tuition and fees as well as room and board, books and other education related expenses.

#### Price

The final amount paid by the student, subtracting financial aid, scholarships and additional resources.

#### Reasonable Debt

Students can repay the debt they must incur to complete their educational programs within a 10-year period based on a reasonable expectation of earnings they receive from completing their program without undue burden or hardship.