

HB21-1330 Higher Education Student Success

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption to the lives of students and their families, the operations of the state's colleges and universities, workforce, and economy. [HB21-1330](#) authorizes federal American Rescue Plan dollars for students, postsecondary institutions, and other entities that fit into the postsecondary pipeline, with a focus on re-engaging students to earn the degrees they started to improve their earning power. The bill implements student success strategies across the state and charges the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) with reimagining the role of postsecondary institutions in a post-pandemic world to build economic resiliency and strengthen the state's workforce.

Sections 2-5: COSI Scholarships, Wraparound Support and Completion Incentives

Using the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) Finish What You Started program, institutions will submit student assistance plans describing how they will use their set allocation of funds to provide direct and indirect support to students who have some college no degree, or were admitted to an institution, but did not enroll during the 2020-2021 academic year. The plans will focus on student support programming, award design, and flexible scholarship and incentive funding models that consider students' entire financial award package and encourages degree and credential completion. The bill directs the COSI Advisory Board to promulgate rules, where stakeholders will help inform:

- Distribution model used to determine allocations for each public institution of higher education based on existing available data, and criteria that takes into account the unique characteristics of rural areas of the state, enrollment, and characteristics unique to area technical colleges

This section creates a new grant program within COSI to provide competitive grants to assist school districts in increasing their student aid application completion rate. To be eligible to participate in the grant program, a local education provider must require students to complete the student aid applications before graduation unless the requirement is waived under conditions described by the local education provider.

Section 6: Colorado Reengagement (CORE) Initiative

There are at least 13,000 Coloradans who started bachelor's degree programs but stopped out before receiving a postsecondary just in the past 3 years. This means the top credential these students have obtained is a high school diploma. To help this population, this section allows universities to award an associate degree to students who 1) did not transfer into the institution from a community college; 2) earned 70 or more credits before withdrawing from the institution; and 3) have not enrolled for two consecutive semesters. The Department is charged to help institutions implement and market this initiative.

Sections 7-12: Bachelor of Applied Science Programs

This section makes the community college Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) program approval process consistent with the process for approval of Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs. Governing boards must ensure that BAS degree programs align with student and workforce demand, are cost effective for the students, institutions, and the state, and meet accreditation and licensing requirements. This will bring consistency and efficiency in approval processes across applied degree programs and enable institutions to roll out new workforce-aligned programs more quickly. It will also reduce barriers for institutions to innovate and will create more opportunities for students.

For More Information

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Colorado Department of Higher Education <https://highered.colorado.gov/>

Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/>

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Section 13: Future of Higher Education Task Force

Due in part to the challenges and pressures caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher education are facing new operational and economic realities driven by declining enrollment, increasing demand for remote learning options, and the increasing costs of providing in-person education and maintaining physical campuses. The near overnight shift to all online learning at the start of the pandemic has disrupted notions of when, where, and how learning can occur, along with the types of credentials that should be offered by institutions. These new realities create opportunities to systemically re-examine and reconsider the operations and interactions of the state institutions of higher education and how institutions—individually and collaboratively—can most effectively meet the educational needs of Colorado's citizens and Colorado's workforce needs.

This section charges the Commission on Higher Education to convene a task force by August 2021. The task force will review: 1) role and mission, and service area of each institution, 2) leveraging best practices and data in student success interventions and developing responsive and equitable postsecondary pathways, 3) strategies to leverage future federal higher education reforms such as making the first two years of college tuition-free, and 4) ways to reduce overlap and provide efficiencies to meet workforce needs. The task force will provide a report of recommendations by December 15, 2021, to the public, CCHE and the General Assembly.

Section 14: Working Group to Increase Student Aid Completion

Colorado ranks 47th in the nation in FAFSA form completion for high school seniors. Statewide completion for the 2020-21 FAFSA is currently 41.5%, lagging just behind two previous year annual rates of 44.4%. The low participation rate means that our state is leaving more than \$30M federal grant dollars on the table annually. Additionally, students are not leveraging state aid because the FAFSA and CASFA are the primary mechanism institutions use to determine and award state financial aid.

This section creates a working group in the Department to recommend measures for increasing the number of students who, before graduating from high school, complete the student aid applications. The working group consists of thirteen members appointed by the Governor. The group will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to significantly increase the student aid applications to the General Assembly, State Board of Education and CCHE by January of 2022.

Section 15: Classification for Instate Tuition

To help local employers recruit and retain skilled workers, the bill permits colleges and universities to lower tuition rates for non-resident students recruited to live and work in Colorado by employers that provide tuition benefits to their employees. This plan was conceived and endorsed by several Western Slope chambers of commerce and will lower the costs of providing tuition benefits to Colorado businesses and governments, including school districts and police and fire departments.

Supporters

