



Colorado College | Regis University | University of Denver

October 22, 2020

The Honorable Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado
State Capitol Building
200 East Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Polis,

The members of Independent Higher Education of Colorado (IHEC), Colorado College, Regis University, and the University of Denver ask that you partner with us to help ensure *all* of Colorado's students have access to needed financial aid resources to achieve their goals. Specifically, we ask you to:

- *Restore the COF-funded financial aid cut so we can continue to assist these Colorado students in need;*
- *Allow our institutions to be eligible to apply directly for RISE grants alongside our public higher education partners; and we ask*
- *To be included as full partners in the higher education benefits and programs that come from Federal assistance now and going forward.*

Our institutions are focused on the same goals you have for all Colorado students; an affordable, accessible and high quality post-secondary education that gives students a path for opportunity and success. We contribute substantially to the completion goals in Colorado's Higher Education's Master Plan by making high quality degrees affordable to even low-income students though aid from federal, state and institution resources and our commitment to timely degree completion. Our institutions have been dedicated to serving Colorado students, families and supporting a thriving economy since before statehood. Today we are doing more for Colorado's first generation, low-income, and students of color than ever before. *Collectively we serve almost 9,000 Colorado students and provide over \$100 million in total institutional aid to Colorado students on top of Pell Grants and other scholarships.*

Restore COF-funded financial aid.

We realize the state faces many difficult budget balancing decisions, but it was a significant loss to many students at our institutions when our College Opportunity Fund (COF) aid was cut by 58 percent earlier this year. We ask that you restore COF-funded financial aid. The state investment in nonprofit colleges and universities, through need-based financial aid and the College Opportunity Fund make a big difference to our Colorado students who are in the process of

completing high quality degrees today. We recognize that needs are especially great right now and that resources are limited.

Allow our institutions to be eligible to apply directly for RISE grants.

It was an additional hardship when our institutions were not included as eligible applicants for the \$32.7 million in assistance from the CARES Act funded Response, Innovation, and Student Equity (RISE) competitive grants alongside public colleges, K-12 school districts and charter schools. A primary goal of the RISE grants is to further innovation and assist Colorado students and families with financial needs, a goal which directly aligns with our ongoing contributions to our students and the state. *We ask that you allow our institutions to be eligible to apply directly for RISE grants.*

On top of helping to prepare Colorado's future workforce, our institutions make substantial investments and contributions to our local and state economies. Recent economic impact studies show that Colorado College, Regis University and the University of Denver collectively employ almost 8,000 full time staff and faculty and provide over \$450 million annually in direct economic benefit to Colorado. The same studies show that the direct and indirect economic benefit would total over \$1 billion annually to the state. That's why the relatively small investment the state makes to our institutions through the College Opportunity Fund and state need-based financial aid is so important. We leverage every state dollar we receive to increase direct aid to our neediest Colorado students.

Include us as full partners in the higher education benefits and programs that come from federal assistance now and going forward.


COVID-19 has hit all of us hard. Our institutions face the same challenges as our public counterparts and are working diligently to keep Colorado students safe while continuing to provide a top-quality educational experience. For this reason, we collaborated with the public campuses to collectively ask leaders in Washington to assist *all* Colorado higher education through the CARES Act without exception. We contribute to the goals of the state and work in partnership with our public colleagues in seeking badly needed federal assistance. We want to be at the table, alongside the public governing boards, when important policies that impact Colorado students are being considered. *Include us as full partners in the higher education benefits and programs that come from federal assistance now and going forward.* We assure you we will continue to do our part to help Colorado students and the state achieve their laudable higher education goals and continue our longstanding partnership. For example:

- At **Regis University** 51% of students are students of color and 30% are first generation students. The six-year graduation rate for Latino students at Regis is 65% (state average is 47%), for African American students that number is 75% (state average is 37%),
- The average class size at the **University of Denver** is 21 students with a student to faculty ratio of 11:1 but student debt on graduation remains below the Colorado average and the student loan default rate is 1.8%,
- **Colorado College** recently introduced the Colorado Pledge to assist Colorado families. Families making less than \$60,000 per year pay no tuition, room or board. Those making between \$60,000 and \$125,000 pay no tuition and families making between \$125,000 and \$200,000 a year will pay the same tuition as in-state students at Colorado's flagship university.

We fully support the state's higher education goals and look forward to sharing our story as we partner together to achieve those goals.

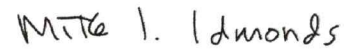
Finally, we want to thank you for your smart, proactive leadership during the COVID-19 crisis which has made a significant difference in keeping Colorado families safer over the months since the pandemic became part of our daily lives. We especially appreciate your recognition that COVID-19 has been particularly challenging for Colorado educators. From early childhood through higher education, this crisis has put enormous pressure on parents, students, teachers, faculty, staff and families along with our educational institutions. The RISE grants will be a significant help to offset some of the vast needs faced by our K-12 and public higher education partners.

Sincerely,



John Fitzgibbons, S.J.
President, Regis University

Jeremy Haefner
Chancellor, University of
Denver



Mike Edmonds
Interim President, Colorado
College

