



COLORADO

Department of
Higher Education

1600 Broadway, Suite 2200
Denver, CO 80202

Meeting	Academic Council May 12, 2026 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Location	Remote ONLY
Call-In Information	View Meeting Recording
Meeting Participants	Provosts and Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) of the public institutions of higher education
Meeting Objectives	Members advise the Department on policy development and implementation, as well as other matters affecting higher education.

AGENDA – NOTES

1. Greetings and Introductions

In attendance: Laura Borgelt (CU Anschutz); Rachel Borum (UNC);); Helen Caprioglio (CSUP); Jerid Counterman (CSUG); Margaret Doell (ASU); Roze Hentschell (CSU-SYS); Andy Herring (CSM); Anne Marie Jacobson (CCCS-FRCC); Mark Kavanaugh (CU Boulder); Jill Lange (MSU Denver); Mike Lightner (CU-SYS); Karen Marrongelle (CU Denver); Kim Miloch (CSU); Janice Nerger (CSUG); Dave Oehler (Aims); Tina Parscal (CCCS); Kathryn Regjo (CMC); Susan Taylor (UCCS); Linda Van Doren (EGTC); Heather MacGillivray (CO Data); Danielle Ongart (CDE); Michelle Romero (CDE); Christina Carrillo (CDHE); Carl Einhaus (CDHE); Spencer Ellis (CDHE); Brad Griffith (CDHE); JB Holston (CDHE); Renée Welch (CDHE)

Carl welcomed attendees and recognized first-time participants representing Front Range Community College (FRCC) and the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). Members were invited to share institutional updates, which highlighted recent programmatic successes, including the graduation of the first dental hygiene cohort at Colorado Mountain College (CMC) with strong employment outcomes, and expanded approval for Pell-eligible prison education programs at Adams State University (ASU). These updates underscored ongoing institutional efforts to expand access and workforce-aligned programming. Members were encouraged to continue sharing updates in future meetings.

2. Approval of April Meeting Notes

[see handout: 2026-04-14 NOTES-AC.pdf]

Notes approved

3. Announcements and Discussion Items

a. Introduction of JB Holston as new Executive Director of CDHE

Executive Director Holston provided updates on departmental priorities, emphasizing a focus on operational excellence amid constrained state budgets. He also spoke about the Department's efforts to streamline reporting requirements (with a goal of reducing approximately 64 reports to 32). He encouraged Council members to provide feedback on these efforts via a survey that was distributed via email earlier in the week. Broader sector concerns were also discussed, including financial sustainability of higher education institutions, changing enrollment patterns, and increasing interest in shorter-term credentials. Executive Director Holston encouraged collaboration and rapid sharing of best practices, particularly related to artificial intelligence and institutional innovation. Additionally, HB 26-1317 (postsecondary talent legislation) is expected to guide future departmental restructuring discussions through a transition advisory committee, with implementation planning to continue following the bill's anticipated signing.

b. Presentation and Q&A on Colorado Department of Education's [The Big Three](#) initiative (Danielle Ongart, Assistant Commissioner of Student Pathways & Engagement and Michelle Romero, Director, Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness, CDE)

Danielle and Michelle from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) presented on Senate Bill 25-315 and the "Big Three" postsecondary workforce readiness priorities: college credit attainment, industry-recognized credentials, and work-based learning. The legislation consolidates multiple programs into streamlined funding structures (Startup, Sustain, and Future Innovation funds) and establishes a statewide goal that all students graduate having completed at least one of the Big Three beginning with the class of 2029. The presentation clarified definitions, data collection processes, and funding mechanisms, including a reliance on cross-agency data sharing (notably with CDHE) and outcome-based funding tied to student participation. Council discussion highlighted an opportunity for future collaboration, particularly around analyzing student outcomes (e.g., persistence and completion following AP/IB or concurrent enrollment), with CDHE noting that expanded data dashboards and the statewide longitudinal data system will support this work moving forward.

c. Colorado's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) (Heather MacGillivray, Manager, SLDS)

Heather provided an update on the Colorado SLDS (now called Colorado Data Connections, or CO Data). CO Data integrates education and workforce data from early childhood through employment outcomes. The system, mandated by HB 24-1364,

1600 Broadway, Suite 2200, Denver, CO 80202

Phone 303-862-3001 • Email CDHE@dhe.state.co.us

www.highered.colorado.gov



currently includes data from 2010 onward and will support cross-sector analysis, including outcomes related to concurrent enrollment, AP/IB participation, and workforce participation. Initial reporting requirements include public dashboards and analyses of enrollment, completion, and wage outcomes, with the first major deliverable expected in September 2026. Future enhancements will include additional data elements (e.g., coursework) and potential expanded access for agency and external researchers. Council members discussed the long-term potential for more real-time data integration, though this will depend on future legislative and technical developments. As the system matures, members can expect opportunities to engage with dashboards and contribute to data-informed policy and program evaluation efforts.

- d. [Basic Needs Campus Designation](#), [Career-Connected Campus Designation](#), and [CO-WIL](#) updates (Renée Welch, Director of Career Connected Learning & Workforce Development, CDHE)

Renée introduced new institutional designations under the Higher Education Impact Framework, including Basic Needs and Career Connected Campus designations. These designations recognize institutional efforts to support student success and workforce alignment. Applications for the Basic Needs designation are currently open, with institutions expected to demonstrate infrastructure and programming across multiple support categories. Career Connected Campus designation criteria focus on integrating workforce development into academic and co-curricular experiences. Renée also introduced the Colorado Work-Integrated Learning (CO-WIL) Consortium, a three-year pilot created by HB 25-1186 and supported by \$5.5 million in philanthropic funding. The consortium will partner with selected institutions to embed employer-sponsored projects into curriculum, with implementation supported by an external partner (Riipen). [A statewide survey](#) is currently underway to gather input on work-based learning practices, with results to be reviewed at a June 5 convening to inform legislative recommendations due July 1. Institutions are encouraged to complete the survey and engage in forthcoming consortium activities.

- e. Updates from CCHE Advisor Michael Lightner

Dr. Lightner provided a summary of the May 8 Commission meeting, including updates on report streamlining efforts, anticipated budget constraints (including a potential 4% reduction target for state agencies), and ongoing legislative and policy discussions. The Commission continues to shift its framing from “transfer” to broader “credit mobility,” signaling an emphasis on student-centered pathways across institutions. Upcoming policy reviews will focus first on statewide transfer/GT Pathways and credit for prior learning, followed by additional policy areas related to program approval and discontinuation. The Commission also selected new leadership, with Jill Barkin as Chair

1600 Broadway, Suite 2200, Denver, CO 80202

Phone 303-862-3001 • Email CDHE@dhe.state.co.us

www.highered.colorado.gov



and Eric Tucker as Vice Chair. Council members should anticipate engagement in upcoming policy review processes and continued alignment with Commission priorities.

f. Transfer initiatives update (Carl Einhaus)

- Higher Education Transfer Audit
- CCHE Transfer Subcommittee

Carl provided an update on implementation of the State Auditor's transfer audit recommendations, which include 19 total items, three of which have already been completed. Work is ongoing through the Transfer Subcommittee to develop policy responses, with final recommendations due for Commission approval by September in advance of the October 1 deadline. Staff emphasized the importance of thoughtful policy integration and noted that stakeholder engagement will occur as draft changes are developed, particularly with the General Education (GE) Council and other advisory bodies. Council members should expect to review and provide input on policy changes in the coming months as this work advances.

g. New academic forms available

- *[See handouts: Request Form for GT Pathways Waiver.docx, Request Form for Credit Cap Exception.docx]*

Brad introduced two new standardized forms to improve consistency in academic processes: a GT Pathways waiver request form for degree programs and a credit cap exception request form for programs exceeding 120 credit hours. These forms are intended to formalize existing processes and improve transparency and predictability for institutions. The forms will be posted online and available for use immediately, and institutions were invited to provide feedback or suggest additional areas where standardized processes may be helpful.

h. Institutional check-in – what is happening on your campuses?

4. New, modified, and closed programs

a. New

- Adams State University
 - Undergraduate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence
 - Undergraduate Certificate in Cybersecurity
- Colorado School of Mines
 - Bachelor of Science in Quantum Systems Engineering
- Colorado State University
 - Bachelor of Science in Environmental Public Health
 - Bachelor of Science in Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases
- Colorado State University – Global Campus

1600 Broadway, Suite 2200, Denver, CO 80202

Phone 303-862-3001 • Email CDHE@dhe.state.co.us

www.highered.colorado.gov



- Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
- b. Modified
 - Colorado School of Mines
 - Graduate Certificate in Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage changed to Graduate Certificate in Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage
 - Graduate Certificate in Natural Resources & Energy Policy changed to Graduate Certificate in Environment, Resources & Energy Policy
 - Master of Science in Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage changed to Master of Science in Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage
 - Colorado State University – Global Campus
 - Undergraduate Certificate in Patient Safety and Healthcare Quality changed to Undergraduate Certificate in Healthcare Quality and Patient Safety
- c. Closed Programs
 - Colorado School of Mines
 - Graduate Certificate in Energy Geophysics
 - Graduate Certificate in Environmental Modeling
 - University of Colorado Boulder
 - Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
 - Master of Engineering in Electrical and Computer Engineering
 - Master of Science in Technology, Cybersecurity and Policy
 - PhD in Technology, Cybersecurity and Policy

ACTION ITEMS

Issue	Action / Next Step	Assigned To & Date Assigned

