Elevator Pitch

By 2020, nearly 75 percent of jobs in Colorado will require some education beyond high school – a certificate, two-year or four-year degree. Yet today, almost one-third of Colorado’s adult population lacks education of any type after high school. If we allow these trends to continue, we risk leaving too many bright, hardworking Coloradans behind. We are, after all, building a community, not just a workforce.

That’s why the Colorado Department of Higher Education has enacted the Colorado Rises Master Plan – four bold, urgent strategies that drive toward a goal of 66 percent credential attainment by 2025. And we all have a role to play. Together, we can ensure Colorado continues to be known for innovation, entrepreneurialism and a population capable of leading our nation.

About Colorado Rises Master Plan

Goal #1
Increase Credential Completion

Goal #2
Erase Equity Gaps

Goal #3
Improve Student Success

Goal #4
Invest in Affordability and Innovation

Why is Higher Education Important?

Benefits for the Individual

- Earn higher incomes
- Enjoy a healthier lifestyle
- Have lower unemployment rates

Benefits for Economic Development

- By 2020, nearly 75 percent of jobs will require some education beyond high school
- Demand for college-educated adults in Colorado is fifth highest in the nation; demand for high school-only trained adults in Colorado is second weakest in the nation
- This is not just about a workforce - we must grow and retain our talent from the ground up
- We must invest in the long game by preparing individuals for the jobs of today with the skills and knowledge to adapt and fill the jobs of tomorrow

Benefits for the Public Good

- Rely on fewer social services and public safety nets
- Create jobs that yield tax revenue and contribute toward building a stronger economy
- More likely to contribute to their communities
What is our Goal?

Key Messages
- “Colorado Rises” reaffirms our statewide goal: by 2025, 66 percent of adults will earn a post-high school certificate or degree.
- Our plan outlines four specific, tangible and measurable strategies to help us reach our goal.
- Since our 2012 Colorado Competes master plan first articulated the goal of 66 percent, we rose 53.5 to 56.2 percent attainment—we can’t just stay the course.
- Attainment gaps exist at an unacceptable level. Only 29 percent of Hispanics, our fastest growing population, and 45 percent of African Americans have a certificate or degree, as compared with 65 percent for the white majority.
- Colorado’s gap between educational attainment of the white majority and Hispanic minority is the second largest in the nation, behind only California.

What are the Barriers?

Key Messages
- Colorado ranks lowest among the states in per-student funding.
- Compounded by inflation and rising costs, the impact on families is significant.
- We are pricing many of our own students, our most talented and valuable citizens out of any opportunity for higher education.
- State funding per pupil is below where we were 15 years ago.
- In 2000, the state funded two-thirds of a student’s cost of higher education, while the student was responsible for one-third. By 2016, that ratio had flipped; the state now funds only one-third.
- Over the past five years, tuition at four year colleges in Colorado grew 38 percent, while median income grew by only 13 percent.
- More than 60 percent of students graduate from public institutions with debt.

Calls to Action

Spread the word! Talk to your neighbors, friends, family and co-workers about the importance of having a certificate or degree in today’s economy.

Write to your state, local and federal representatives and tell them you support equitable, affordable and accessible higher education and training.

Reengage with your Colorado alma mater, local higher ed institution or local school. Find out how you can support their efforts to introduce more Coloradans to the pathways available to a more successful future.

Become a mentor to a young person. Share your own personal story of success, and help students understand the importance of finding the right pathway to higher education to support their own dreams.

Learn more and take action to become part of the solution at masterplan.highered.colorado.gov