

Reaching New Heights



Strategic Plan Next Steps, Priorities & Assignments

TO: All Colorado Mountain College Staff and Faculty
FROM: Carrie Besnette Hauser, President
CC: CMC Board of Trustees
RE: Strategic Plan Implementation
DATE: April 22, 2014

With the recent completion and Board of Trustee approval of our new strategic plan (Plan), Reaching New Heights, the challenging - and exciting - work begins. As you know, the Plan is designed to guide our institution for the next four years. Accordingly, we will address and implement the Plan in stages over this timeframe, align resources with our priorities, measure and assess our effectiveness and progress, and make necessary adjustments along the way.

As you know, our new strategic plan includes five major goals and fifteen strategic directions (see attached one-page overview). While we may wish to pursue all of the strategic directions immediately (and we will get to them, I assure you), attempting to do so could stretch us very thin and compromise our overall effectiveness. Therefore, we will concentrate our energy on a more measured, focused, systematic, and sustainable approach.

The purpose of this memo is to:

1. Identify and communicate the four most immediate and overarching priorities of the new Plan.
2. Define the process, leadership, focus on student success, structure, and timeline we'll need to implement the Plan, especially during the first year.

PROCESS

The coming weeks and months will involve an inclusive and collaborative process with faculty, staff, students, and CMC stakeholders to refine these priorities and ensure their consistent translation and intended impact. Keep in mind this is only the beginning. We will regularly evaluate, improve, and adjust these efforts as needed to most effectively reach our shared goals.

LEADERSHIP

You will note designated CMC senior leaders assigned to guide our broad implementation components. They will have direct accountability to me for progress, budgets, reporting, and any course-correcting. I have asked these individuals or "Leads" to build Implementation Teams that are inclusive and representative of our functional areas, campuses, geography, students, faculty, and employee categories and to further assign co-chairs for specific project components as appropriate and necessary. (In some cases, existing working groups may already be in place; for example AQIP Action Teams.) Rest assured, there will be ample opportunity to participate and I invite and encourage each of you to do so. If you have an interest in working on one of the listed priority areas, please reach out to any of the respective leads to "raise your hand." The process is intended to be transparent and collegial and to challenge all of us to reinforce what works while embracing new ideas, innovations, and alternatives to the status quo.

CMC's Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Matt Gianneschi, will provide overall coordination/facilitation for this effort. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE), led by Dr. Deborah Loper, will spearhead efforts to prepare data and other evidence for each Implementation Team and its various components. An IE advisor will be assigned to each team to develop metrics and provide technical expertise and guidance.

According to the Association of Governing Boards, one of the basic responsibilities of governing boards is to “charge the chief executive with the task of leading a strategic planning process, participate in that process, approve the strategic plan, and monitor its progress.” While it is our collective responsibility to implement the plan and to determine the methods and programming to do so, it is also a “best practice” to keep the board informed of our progress, successes, and challenges. As such, I have asked Drs. Gianneschi and Loper to engage designated members of the CMC Board of Trustees and keep them apprised of our progress. These Trustees are noted as liaisons. The full board will also receive periodic strategic planning updates from me, and the priority areas outlined below closely align with my own performance goals and objectives for the coming year.

FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

Finally and importantly, the implementation of our new strategic plan is not intended to “make work” or prompt organizational changes simply for their own sake. Rather, we have a rare opportunity to build a foundation for the College's next fifty years while honoring its historical and visionary roots. To that end, we must find ways to successfully support more students, improve operational effectiveness, and build a first-rate system of campuses that are inclusive and fiscally healthy, and which deliver robust, high-quality instruction. We must always remember that our focus is to improve educational outcomes for the students we serve. All of our strategies and efforts should be oriented toward these outcomes and positively impacting the experiences and successes of CMC students.

PRIORITIES

With these imperatives in mind, our focus in the near term will be on these **four immediate and overarching priorities** (see details on separate sheet):

1. Developing a plan for organizational effectiveness
2. Developing a strategic enrollment management plan
3. Developing a diversity and inclusion plan
4. Improving internal and external CMC communications

GOVERNANCE AND ASSESSMENT

In addition to the specific priority implementation components above, we will also continue broad efforts to develop strong and sustainable governance practices and to improve academic quality assessment. Regarding the former, the CMC Board of Trustees and I have already initiated a “high performing boards” process with the Association of Governing Boards to clarify board roles and responsibilities and those of management and staff. Regarding academic quality assessment, the College will continue to implement actions intended to address initial findings from our recent HLC accreditation site visit as well as any (pending) formal feedback from the review team. I believe you will find that their recommendations will sync up very closely to the priorities outlined in this memo.

NEXT STEPS

Between now and July 1, the designated Leads will formulate membership of the Implementation Teams (and sub-teams, where appropriate) and begin to focus on gathering meaningful data in order to answer the following questions:

1. What is our objective? How is it defined? What do we mean when we say terms like “effective” or “successful” or “optimize”? What will progress look like and how will it be measured?
2. Where are we now? What evidence do we have? What is our historical baseline?
3. What efforts are currently in place and which ones are working or not? How do we know?

Evidence collected through this process will be shared with the entire College. Early in the fall term, we will solicit feedback and design strategies to address our known “opportunities for improvement,” to borrow a phrase from our HLC accreditation site visit team. Most importantly, and before we take on any new initiatives, we should remain disciplined to look at the data until we are satisfied that we have a clear and objective picture of our priorities and what we expect to achieve with future efforts.

TIMELINE

April 15 – June 30, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Formation of Implementation Teams▶ Data gathering and benchmarking▶ Aligning budgeting to priorities
July 1 – December 31, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Formal launch of “Reaching New Heights”▶ President takes the strategic plan “to the road,” communicating its objectives and intended outcomes internally and externally▶ Implementation teams develop and complete plans
January 1 – June 30, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Implementation of plans and framework to address additional strategic directions

SUPPORTING CHANGE

Change will come. We all need to be willing to discuss what works and what doesn't, as well as to accept and support change. We must be open to looking at new or alternative models and focus on students first, not our own comfort or customs. Our efforts should be manageable, focused, innovative and forward-thinking, and data-driven.

So, get ready to “reach new heights” together and to achieve our shared vision and aspiration to become...

“the most inclusive and innovative student-centered college in the nation, elevating the economic, social, cultural, and environmental vitality of our beautiful Rocky Mountain communities.”

Reaching New Heights



Immediate and overarching priorities:

- **1** **Developing a plan for organizational effectiveness** and ensuring that the College has the internal systems and processes, organization, governance structure, and human and financial resources necessary to achieve its long-term mission and vision (**Strategic Directions A3, E1, E3, & E5**). An organization can only achieve great things if its structures are effective, well-defined, and sustainable. Over time, the College's systems and structures have become blurred and/or dated and are not effectively aligned. As such, we must develop an organizational structure that clarifies roles and responsibilities, including clarifying the relationships between campuses and Central Services, campus-to-campus interactions, and the balance and most optimal distribution of full-time and part-time faculty and staff. We must also invest in operating systems that enable us to work and support students and employees in the most effective ways. The focus of this Implementation Team will be improvements in administrative effectiveness – streamlining administrative costs while improving services to students – and finding the right balance between operational consistency and contextual flexibility. The analysis by our outside consultant, Stevens Strategy Group, and their initial recommendations will serve as a jumpstart to this effort and enable us to begin addressing this priority area both immediately and incrementally over the coming year.
– **Leads:** Linda English, Dave Askeland, and Susanna Spaulding. **Trustee Liaisons:** Glenn Davis and Ken Brenner. **Members:** TBD.
- **2** **Developing a strategic enrollment management plan** (**Strategic Directions C1, C2, & E5**). This will not be an aspirational plan for growth, but rather a comprehensive examination of our historical trends, current realities, and predicted future. This plan will include projections for each campus and each student category (traditional aged, non-traditional, credit, non-credit, on-line, and high school). If our enrollment targets are not grounded in reality, all other strategic efforts will fail. Therefore, we need to know how we got to where we are and where we are going if nothing else changes. If we can do this – and have confidence in the findings – we will have a solid foundation upon which to base our future efforts and develop targeted initiatives.
– **Leads:** Lin Stickler, Peter Perhac, and James Taylor. **Trustee Liaisons:** Pat Chlouber and Kathy Goudy. **Members:** TBD.
- **3** **Developing a diversity and inclusion plan**, thereby supporting the vitality and quality of the College as well as our communities and region (**Strategic Directions A1, B1, C1, D1, E3, & E4**). This plan will include specific actions to increase the diversity of employees (faculty and staff). It will also connect closely with the strategic enrollment management plan to recruit, retain, and graduate historically underserved students, particularly first-generation and in-district Hispanic/Latino students. As most of you already know, I believe deeply that the dream of college must be available to all who can benefit from it. Demographically speaking, CMC's employees and students do not closely resemble the populations in the College's service area. Truly great colleges connect their services and instruction to all of the communities they serve. And they take seriously inclusive practices, cultural competencies, and related professional development. If we all share these assumptions, we must take the intentional steps necessary to realize them. And in doing so, CMC will take a dramatic step forward to address the economic vitality and quality of life in our communities.
– **Leads:** Brad Tyndall, Joe Maestas, and Gwyn Ebie. **Trustee Liaisons:** Bob Taylor and Mary Ellen Denomy. **Members:** TBD.
- **4** **Improving internal and external CMC communications** (**Strategic Directions C3, E1, & E2**). Following a period of major transition and organizational change, it is incumbent on the College to improve its internal and external communications. This will be accomplished by reaching out to external constituencies including business, government, and civic leaders; the media; employers; and key volunteers to reengage them and enlist them in realizing our refreshed mission and vision. Internally, new or revised methods of information sharing from top leadership will be implemented to ensure transparency, to build stronger relationships between Central Services and the campuses, and to be “one College” with strong, unique, and enterprising components. We will also reposition, market, and communicate the purpose and value of Colorado Mountain College in our communities and throughout our state through a strategic branding initiative that will embody our mission, vision, values, and guiding principles.
– **Leads:** Roger Sheffield, Peggy Curry, and Nancy Genova. **Board Liaison:** Charles Cunniffe. **Members:** TBD.