

NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Higher Education announces campus partnerships, convenes community and business leaders to launch two-year equity effort

DENVER – Feb. 20, 2018: Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, executive director of the Department of Higher Education (CDHE), convened higher education, community and business leaders at History Colorado today to launch work commissioned under a \$500,000 Talent, Innovation and Equity (TIE) grant, which was awarded to the Department of Higher Education by Lumina Foundation last year.

“Colorado’s future success depends on every young person having the chance to reach his or her full potential,” said Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne. “Supporting minority students to reach key educational milestones will be a critical part of achieving this goal, and Colorado is grateful for the Lumina Foundation’s support of the work we are doing both in government and directly at our higher education campuses.”

The grant will fund three high-impact initiatives designed to accelerate progress toward the statewide goals of reaching 66 percent attainment and closing equity gaps among white students and students of color by 2025. These include:

- establishing a statewide equity steering committee and coalition of equity champions to promote community engagement and guide the work;
- enhancing culturally-responsive professional development among faculty; and
- supporting direct campus interventions at Pueblo Community College, Colorado State University-Pueblo and Community College of Aurora.

“We’ve been encouraged by our statewide [attainment gains](#) and the increases we see among our minority students. This Lumina grant will help us accelerate our momentum as we work to erase equity gaps in Colorado,” said Dr. Reed. “Today we kicked off all three phases of the work and I am grateful for the leadership that has come together to change the narrative for our minority students.”

The three higher education institutions were selected because they have significant minority enrollment, are well positioned to improve outcomes and have a strong desire among leadership and the campus community to erase equity gaps.

Dr. Patty Erjavec, president of Pueblo Community College said, “This opportunity to partner with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Lumina Foundation provides Pueblo Community College with some additional resources and the support to further foster our vision of becoming a TRIO-like college. We serve smart, capable students who, with additional academic and student supports, can accomplish anything! We do not just give lip service to the vision of erasing equity gaps here at PCC; it is part of our DNA.”

Dr. Timothy Mottet, president of Colorado State University-Pueblo said, “We are honored to partner with CDHE on an initiative that maps to the goals we have set at Colorado State University-Pueblo. Our faculty and staff at CSU-Pueblo know that academic ability is not limited to a zip code. Academic ability is equally distributed across all groups of students, regardless of income and color. Pueblo and Southern Colorado are full of highly talented high school students who have the ability to complete a university degree. Our responsibility is to provide them

with a GPS or a pathway that will allow them to complete a degree and then make significant contributions to their family, work place and community where they live.”

Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, president of Community College of Aurora said, “The Community College of Aurora is striving to create an inclusive and equitable educational experience for our very diverse students and we appreciate the opportunity to partner with CDHE to improve our student success outcomes.”

With the grant funding, the campuses are focused on improving student retention and completion in a number of ways including enhanced academic support, mentoring, parent engagement and faculty professional development.

In addition to the campuses selected for the equity partnerships, all higher education campuses are working to improve their outcomes for students, including minority students. Additional outreach is planned to ensure strong on-going statewide engagement.

Attending today’s event were more than 40 business and community leaders from across the state who are committed to articulating the value of this work and the important of erasing equity gaps for Colorado residents.

Colorado has one of the highest equity gaps in the country, measured by the difference between the educational levels for white residents and Hispanic residents, Colorado’s fastest growing minority population. The Hispanic/Latino population has the lowest average educational attainment and the lowest college enrollment rate of any ethnic group in the state.

Under the Lumina grant the Department aims to increase attainment by 6 percent among Hispanic, African American and American Indian groups, which would amount to an additional 13,800 credential awards over four years.

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