



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two Colorado colleges become nation's first "PARCC Pioneers"

Aims Community College and Adams State University will begin accepting scores in 2016 to assess student readiness for college-level work

DENVER — March 9, 2015 - Two Colorado colleges are the nation's first "PARCC Pioneers."

Adams State University in Alamosa is committing to use high school PARCC assessment scores for placement into college courses. Aims Community College in Greeley is pledging to collect PARCC scores to assess the test's validity in predicting student readiness for college-level coursework. The commitments by both schools will save students money on remediation courses, reduce unnecessary testing, and reflects a closer correlation between what students learn in high school and in college.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education worked with PARCC and the two institutions to develop letters of commitment signed by the schools regarding the use of PARCC scores.

"We're proud to be the first state with institutions making a bold step toward relying on PARCC assessments to determine college readiness," said Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia, who oversees the Colorado Department of Higher Education. "This marks a significant shift towards streamlining the testing process for students and helping them identify earlier whether they are prepared for higher education success."

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of states working together to develop a set of assessments that measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. The PARCC assessments are Colorado's new English language arts and mathematics assessments that are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards. The new tests are being administered this month for the first time. The culminating assessments, typically given in 11th grade, are intended to provide an indicator of readiness for credit bearing college coursework.

Adams State will give students the opportunity to use their PARCC scores as a metric of readiness for credit-bearing courses, though the school also reserves the right to look at other test scores in its first year of accepting PARCC. Students who receive top scores of 4 or 5 on PARCC math and English tests will be enrolled into courses that carry credits.

“By pursuing the PARCC option, students can reduce the number of tests they have to take and experience a more seamless transition to college,” said Adams State President David Svaldi.

In its initial year, Aims will ask students to submit PARCC scores and examine the data to ensure PARCC’s validity in measuring readiness, with the goal of transitioning to using PARCC as an option for students to demonstrate readiness for credit-bearing courses in future years.

“It’s important to determine with accuracy students’ preparedness for success in our classrooms,” said Aims Community College President Marilyn Liddell. “We look forward to collaborating in the evaluation of the validity of the PARCC assessments as a postsecondary course placement tool.”

The use of PARCC also will allow K-12 teachers to intervene earlier if students need additional support to be ready for college. Students currently take placement exams to determine their readiness for credit-bearing courses shortly before they begin their college freshman year. PARCC tests, by contrast, are typically administered to high school ninth-through 11th-graders, so students can determine while in high school the gaps they need to fill to be prepared for courses that carry credit.

This early detection and intervention will help to reduce the number of students requiring remedial courses in college, and thereby help to increase the number of students completing college on time. In Colorado, fewer than one in 10 students who begin in remedial courses at community colleges graduate with an associate’s degree or certificate in three years and fewer than a quarter of students who begin in remedial courses at four-year institutions complete a bachelor’s degree in six years, according to data analyzed by Complete College America.

“With this commitment to the new state tests, Adams State and Aims have taken a leadership role toward providing a more seamless connection between high school and college,” said Robert Hammond, Colorado’s Commissioner of Education. “We’re hopeful other institutions will follow the lead of Aims and Adams State, and that more states nationally will look to Colorado as an example.”

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ABOUT AIMS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Aims Community College is a public, fully accredited, two-year contemporary college that offers more than 160 degree/certificate opportunities at 4 campus locations in Northern Colorado. Aims' 47 year long mission to help students achieve learning goals and objectives through effective and efficient options and services continues to grow stronger each year. Aims offers over 4,000 classes that are tailored to current industry trends and excellent general courses designed to transfer to a four-year university or certify students to step right into a specific job. Visit Aims.edu to find out more about their dynamic and diverse programs.

ABOUT ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in the small, southern Colorado city of Alamosa, Adams State University was founded in 1921 specifically to educate teachers for rural communities. It has evolved into a comprehensive university that offers a range of undergraduate disciplines, as well as selected master's and doctoral-level programs. Throughout its history, Adams State has been crucial to enhancing the area's educational opportunity, economic development, and cultural enrichment. It continues a historic commitment to under-served populations, including underrepresented minorities, first-generation, and low-income students. Adams State was the first four-year institution in Colorado to be federally designated a Hispanic Serving Institution.

ABOUT COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Department of Higher Education, under its own authority and through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, oversees and coordinates policy for the public institutions of higher education and authorizes private institutions to operate in the state. Agencies or programs under the department include: College In Colorado, Colorado GEAR UP, CollegeInvest, StudyColorado, Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative, and the Division of Private Occupational Schools. The mission of the department is to provide access to high quality, affordable education for all Colorado residents that is student- centered, quality-driven and performance-based.

ABOUT PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a group of states working together to develop a set of assessments that measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. These high quality, computer-based K–12 assessments in mathematics and English language arts/literacy give teachers, schools, students, and parents better information about whether students are on track in their learning and for success after high school, and tools to help teachers customize learning to meet student needs.