



# COLORADO

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM



August 15, 2020

TO: Awards Selection Committee for Governor Polis' ZTC Challenge

**RE: Endorsement of Colorado Community College System for Governor Polis Award for Overall Excellence in Open Educational Resources and Practices**

Dear Awards Selection Committee:

As Chancellor of the Colorado Community College System (CCCS), I join the Presidents of our 13 colleges in recommending our entire community college system for the ***Governor Polis' Award for Overall Excellence in Open Educational Resources & Practices***.

CCCS is comprised of 13 unique colleges with 40 locations across Colorado, educating over 125,000 students every year. We serve as the primary provider of access and opportunity to higher education in Colorado, especially for students of color and those from low-income families. Our system has led the charge in addressing higher education **affordability** by adopting and expanding the use of open educational resources (OER) and zero textbook cost (ZTC) courses and degrees. Collectively, our faculty and instructors, Board and college and system leadership, and all who support student success are committed to institutionalizing OER as a critical strategy to ensure affordable access for all students to education beyond high school. Through our strategic implementation of OER and ZTC, our students saved nearly \$4 million last year alone, an estimated \$100 savings per course.

A top priority for CCCS is **erasing equity gaps**. OER and ZTC help close equity gaps by significantly lowering costs for students. Lowering costs for students has never been more important than right now. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted us to



survey and assess the specific reasons why students may not enroll for the Fall 2020 semester. The most common reason given for not registering for the fall semester were concerns about **how to pay for college**. Hispanic respondents expressed more concern about paying for college than other races. Of those who indicated paying for college as a concern, more than half thought they would not qualify for financial aid. We are working hard to let all Coloradans know our community colleges are affordable (annual tuition and fees of approximately \$5,000, about 40% of average university tuition). In addition, our colleges have no application fees for admission and many courses use OER, so there are no textbook costs. Recognition by Governor Polis with the award for Overall Excellence in Open Educational Resources and Practices would contribute to our efforts to communicate the message, especially to low-income students, that college is affordable with the assistance of student financial aid and OER. Expansion of OER is an important strategy that leverages technology to provide access to high-quality educational opportunities for all Coloradans.

The Colorado Community College System has demonstrated its commitment to *Open Educational Resources & Practices* and we will continue to do so. This transformative work is the result of the combined efforts of individual professors to college departments, programs, and CCCOnline. We are proud of our collective accomplishments, a few of which are described below, and we are committed to increasing the use of OER throughout our system of colleges in the future.

- Completed the first three z-degree pathways in Colorado; Early Childhood Education, History, and Communication.
- Submitted and were awarded 8 OER grants in Year 1 and 14 in Year 2, for a total of 24 grants totaling nearly \$600,000. These projects represent only a fraction of the varied approaches to OER work from across CCCS.
  - 11 of 13 colleges were awarded institutional awards along with CCCOnline and the CCCS enterprise. Many colleges used grant funding to replace costly textbooks/materials with low-cost or OER textbooks/materials in high-enrollment, high-impact courses while also ensuring that OER textbooks/materials are adapted into accessible formats that benefit all students.



- "WeBWork Consortium: A Collaborative Data Source for Math Instruction" is an excellent example of a collaborative project to implement and expand the infrastructure across the enterprise with an open-source math platform. This alternative to publisher products provides faculty and students with access to math homework questions, without the access codes and cost.
- Funded OER grant projects were highly matched by CCCS staff time and other resources.
  - Colleges are encouraging and supporting campus-level infrastructure and staffing dedicated to the implementation and coordination of OER. For example, Pikes Peak Community College has added a full-time OER coordinator.
- Studied and reported no negative impact on student success measures.
  - Pueblo Community College and Pikes Peak Community College were Year 1 OER grant recipients and quickly replaced costly textbooks with OER options. They both tracked and were the first grantees to confirm that OER options had no negative impact on student success measures.
- Hosted the inaugural OER Conference on the CCCS Lowry Campus, and the Open Education Ambassador Training at Front Range Community College, Larimer Campus.
- Completed Open Education Ambassador Trainings for 48 CCCS faculty, instructors, and staff.
- Provided leadership through the participation of CCCS faculty, staff, students, and administrators on state and national OER organizations including the Colorado Department of Higher Education OER Council and the Executive Committee on the national Community College Consortium on OER.

The Colorado Community College System is changing the way Colorado goes to College. With affordability at the heart of our agenda, it is clear we are institutionalizing OER and working hard to meet the needs of individual students while maximizing the state's and student's investments.

We are proud of our collective efforts and are honored to support the application of the Colorado Community College System for the **Governor Polis Award for Overall Excellence in Open Educational Resources and Practices.**



Sincerely,

Joe Garcia, Chancellor – Colorado Community College System

Dr. Diana Doyle, President  
Arapahoe Community College

Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, President  
Community College of Aurora

Ron Granger, President  
Colorado Northwestern  
Community College

Dr. Everette Freeman, President  
Community College of Denver

Andy Dorsey, President  
Front Range Community College

Dr. Linda Lujan, President  
Lamar Community College

Dr. Curt Freed, President  
Morgan Community College

Jay Lee, President  
Northeastern Junior College

Dr. Tim Alvarez, President  
Otero Junior College

Dr. Lance Bolton, President  
Pikes Peak Community College

Dr. Patty Erjavec, President  
Pueblo Community College

Dr. Michele Haney, President  
Red Rocks Community College

Dr. Rhonda Epper, President  
Trinidad State Junior College