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Colorado Gov. Announces Complete College America "Completion Innovation Challenge" Grant Award

Press Release

25 July 2011

Gov. John Hickenlooper and Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia announced today Colorado will receive a \$1 million grant to fuel policy innovations and reforms aimed at significantly increasing college completion.

The grant is provided by Complete College America as part of its national Completion Innovation Challenge grant competition. With this grant the Colorado Department of Higher Education, in partnership with the state's Community College System, will work at aligning and improving the state's remedial education courses to increase the number of college graduates in Colorado.

"We know that one of the best predictors of Colorado's economic success is a well-educated workforce," Hickenlooper said. "This grant from Complete College America will enhance efforts to create innovative solutions to improving the state's ability to help deliver remedial education. We must ensure that students get the support they need so they stay in school and move toward completing their degrees."

Governors from all 50 states were invited to submit proposals to win one of 10 \$1 million, 18-month implementation grants for innovative, high-impact college completion initiatives designed to enhance student success and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. Thirty-three states ultimately entered the highly competitive contest. As a winning state, Colorado was determined to have one of the nation's most promising strategies to smooth and shorten pathways to college completion for all students.

"Far too often students enroll in college but aren't able to complete their degree, which leaves the state with no return on its investment, and worse yet, the individual with student loan debt with nothing to show for it," said Garcia, who also serves as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education. "Once a student enrolls in college, we need to adopt strategies to keep students in college so they get their degree and this grant is an opportunity to help make this happen."

In May, Colorado submitted a Completion Innovation Challenge grant proposal designed to:

- Reform remedial education throughout Colorado.
- Introduce monetary performance incentives to participating postsecondary institutions.
- Evaluate the efficiency of current state remedial education policies and laws and propose reforms for their improvement.

"Gov. Hickenlooper, Lt. Gov. Garcia and Colorado's college leaders get it: Doing more of the same will not boost student success or get Colorado the additional college graduates it must have to be competitive," said Complete College America President Stan Jones. "It's long past time for bold innovation in higher education to remove unnecessary obstacles to success, fix broken policies that hold students back, speed achievement and redesign pathways to college graduation for the new majority of students who must balance work and school."

"One of the unique missions of the Colorado Community College System is to help underprepared students successfully enter the Colorado work force. As the primary provider of remedial education to Coloradans, it is our goal to eliminate barriers and to create structures that will support students in achieving their academic goals so that they can succeed in today's work force," said Nancy McCallin, President of the Community College System. "This funding will allow our faculty to work with national experts in the field of remediation and developmental education to enhance our programs, ensuring that students are able to quickly transition to college-level work and complete a college degree. Faculty, academic and student affairs leadership at each of the Colorado community colleges is excited to partner with the Colorado Department of Higher Education leaders to improve remediation efforts state-wide and to ultimately increase the number of college certificates and degrees completed."

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