



**COLORADO MESA**  
UNIVERSITY



## ACHIEVING A HIGHER DEGREE

# Self-Study Summary

November 2013

Report to the Higher Learning Commission of the  
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools



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## Colorado Mesa University

### Self-Study Report Summary (2013)

#### An Overview of Colorado Mesa University

Located on Colorado's Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado Mesa University (CMU) is in a largely rural and rather sparsely populated region of the state. Lying midway between Denver and Salt Lake City, the University is located in Grand Junction, surrounded by the Grand Valley, a type of oasis of 120,000 residents in an area otherwise made up of small communities scattered across vast, open spaces. While the University provides cultural, educational, and research opportunities, the city provides access to quality health care, national parks, and world-famous outdoor recreation. Newer residents have moved to the area, attracted by its climate and natural beauty, and the region is developing as an alternative to retirement centers found in hotter climates of the Southwest U.S. The region's economy is based on a mix of traditional ranching and smaller farms that produce fruits and vegetables as well as mineral extraction that experienced boom and bust cycles over the past few decades.

CMU is legislatively mandated in Colorado Revised Statutes 23-1-127 to meet the educational needs of 14 counties in Western Colorado. Spanning 30,000 square miles, CMU's service region is a challenge, not only because of its vastness, but also because of the mountain features and winter weather that make it difficult for many of the region's residents to travel to the main campus. The University has responded to this legislative requirement through programming offered at two off-campus sites, as well as through the expansion of courses delivered via a distance format. In fall 2012, 62% of the University's headcount of 9,482 enrolled exclusively on the main campus, but students enrolled either exclusively on the main campus or in combination with other locations or formats generated 80% of the student credit hours. More than one-third of CMU's student count, however, enrolled in an off-site location, in coursework offered largely online, or as a high school concurrent student. The main campus proportion of the total headcount has remained fairly stable in recent years despite the significant institutionwide growth from academic years 2009-10 through 2011-12.

The University supports a second regional presence sixty miles southeast of Grand Junction, in Montrose, Colorado. The Montrose site focuses primarily on lower division coursework in general education, Nursing, Business, and Teacher Education, along with selected offerings at the upper division. Because it has both a two- and four-year role and mission, CMU also offers career and technical education programs, as well as developmental education, through its open admissions division, Western Colorado Community College (WCCC). This division is located on the Bishop Campus in Grand Junction, approximately three miles from the main campus, and Grand Valley Transit offers service five days a week between the two campuses. Academic programming at both sites, as well as online delivery, is under the responsibility of faculty on the Grand Junction main campus, while technical offerings are delivered through WCCC. All awards or degrees, however, are conferred by CMU's main campus.

The University takes seriously its mission to be a regional education provider for Western Coloradans and, as a result, has moved aggressively to expand distance learning opportunities and support for traditional and non-traditional students alike. At the same time, CMU also recognizes the need to provide for a more diverse group of students. Over the past decade, CMU has invested heavily in the delivery of courses via distance technologies to make education more accessible to Western Coloradans, with approximately eight percent of the University's credit hour generation delivered in an online format in fall 2012 as shown in the above table.

In general, two-thirds of CMU students are from the 14-county region, CMU is attracting an increasingly larger share of students from the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, along the I-25 corridor and centering on Denver. Additionally, more than 10 percent come from outside Colorado, with notable numbers coming from western states including Hawaii. Student profiles for students enrolled on the main campus, in Montrose, at Western Colorado Community College, and in online coursework vary by venue and format. New programs on campus reflect attention to the needs of employers in the region, and student services are being expanded to support the increasingly diverse learners on the campus.

### Significant Developments Since 2003

Tremendous growth and remarkable improvement are key factors in the metamorphosis that has taken place in all areas of CMU's operations in the past 10 years. Some of the most obvious developments are:

- the institution's move to autonomy;
- greater status as a university;
- expansion of programs and infrastructure;
- fulfillment of CMU's mission as a regional educational provider; and
- maintenance of optimal quality as an educational provider for the western region of Colorado.

In 2003, the institution moved from governance by the Trustees of State Colleges in Colorado to oversight by a governing board whose primary focus was the well-being and success of the University. The current CMU Board of Trustees includes 11 voting members appointed by the governor of Colorado and confirmed by the State Senate. There are also two non-voting members, one elected from the CMU faculty and one from the student body. Having a Board of Trustees that focuses on a single institution has enabled the University to more effectively and rapidly address issues specific to the CMU campus.

The University has made notable additions to its undergraduate offerings and initiated degree programs at the master's level (August 1997, 2006, and 2011) and one at the doctoral level (January 2011). It also has evolved into a university, and along with that, the name of the institution changed from Mesa State College to Colorado Mesa University (June 2011). Additionally, in 2005, the institution has expanded its technical division from an industrial, technical, and trade school to one that provides a greater number of career options. Taken as a whole, these programs have consistently targeted fields that are most relevant to society's, and more specifically the region's, current needs.

**Table 1. Number of Certificate/Degree Programs in 2003 and 2012**

Type of Degree	2003	2012
Certificate	8	33
Associate Degree	28	40
Baccalaureate Degree	62	73
Baccalaureate Minor	34	38
Master's Degree	1	4
Doctoral Degree	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>152</b>

In the area of physical plant expansion, there have been extensive campus renovation and heavy investment in technology and green technology. The total square footage of buildings on the campus has essentially doubled, using funding from a combination of state funds, bonds, gifts, and University reserves. In 2003, campus buildings accounted for 876,261 square feet. By 2012, the University's facilities had expanded to 1,722,264 square feet.

Moves toward sustainability and support have also been manifold in CMU's 10-year development. Intentional restructuring of institutional finances has enhanced self-sufficiency and decreased reliance on state support. Investment in institutional aid for students has increased dramatically – more than quintupled since 2004 – even in the face of significant cuts to student aid from the State of Colorado and the federal government.

**Table 3. Financial Aid Received by CMU Students in 2004 and 2011**

Source of Financial Aid	FY 2003-2004	FY 2011-2012	% Change
Institutional	\$699,232	\$4,311,948	516.6%
State	\$2,676,882	\$3,715,622	38.8%
Federal	\$22,003,846	\$63,007,375	186.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,379,960</b>	<b>\$71,034,945</b>	<b>179.8%</b>

Since 2003, and as legislation established the mission of this institution as a regional educational provider, there has been enhanced outreach to the 14-county area through the adoption of distance learning technologies, targeted off-campus instruction, and the establishment of agreements with Colorado Mountain College and other institutions located at a distance from the main campus.

One aspect of CMU that has remained consistent throughout this period of dramatic change is its focus on maximizing the quality of learning for students. While enrollments have increased 62 percent, CMU has maintained small class sizes, with 66 percent of site-based classes having fewer than 30 students. A relatively low student-to-faculty ratio, 23:1, is also a point of pride. CMU has continued throughout the 10-year period to recruit and develop a student-accessible teaching faculty whose main priority is student learning, whether it be at the certificate or doctoral level. In sum, academic program additions, an excellent faculty, enhanced status as a university, increased financial aid, high quality teaching facilities and technology, along with financial restructuring, have established a solid base for CMU as it moves into the future.

### **Self-Study Goals and Processes**

The main goal of the 2013 CMU self-study is to objectively examine and comprehensively evaluate the University in order to identify its areas of strength, as well as its areas of weakness so that processes of continuous quality improvement can be driven by data rather than by reflection alone. By engaging in a deep and expansive self-study, CMU is reinforcing a culture of improvement based on evidence, analysis, and documentation that will serve not only as a current reference, but also as a guide for future directions.

Obtaining re-affirmation of CMU's accreditation from the HLC is, of course, a main outcome of the self-study; however, unless the University uses the self-study for continued improvement, only parts of its goals have been met. The primary goal has been to conduct the process with transparency, integrity, and intellectual honesty, making all relevant information publicly available to stakeholders and engaging all stakeholders in the process to achieve a perspective inclusive of multiple constituencies. A final goal of this self-study is to position CMU for an effective transition to the new Pathways accreditation model, which will lead to further development of continuous improvement goals on the campus.

The current self-study began in spring 2011 with the appointment of a Self-Study Steering Committee that included broad representation from the CMU community. Five Criterion Committees were also formed with members representative of both staff and faculty from as many departments as possible. The first meetings of the Steering Committee took place in April and May 2011. At those meetings, the Steering Committee examined the then available Beta Version of the HLC Criteria and began identifying sources of information related to the criteria.

During fall 2011, the Steering Committee and the Criterion Committees met regularly, gathering data and interpreting the November-released Gamma Version of the five criteria. The subcommittees created chapter plans to guide them in the research required for their respective chapters of the self-study report. Throughout academic year 2011-12, extensive collections of data were organized into an electronic resource room and analyzed by the working groups as they began the writing process in response to the final Delta Version of the HLC Criteria in February 2012.

The Steering Committee co-chairs began meeting with the Criterion Committee chairs in fall 2012 to work toward integrating chapter drafts into a working self-study report document in preparation for circulating the draft

through various constituencies. These constituencies included CMU students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees. During this period, revisions and refinements to the document continued as responses from the campus were incorporated. A semi-final draft was completed in May 2013, and the Steering Committee worked over the summer to finalize the self-study report. The Board of Trustees approved the document in late summer in preparation for submission of the self-study to the Commission.

### **Organization of the Self-Study Report Summary**

Each of the five criteria is treated separately. Under each of the five criteria there are core component and sub-component sections. Responses to each component (and sub-component) are presented as evidence items. In the full report, each of these is accompanied by narrative following each item, as well as links to data sources, documents, and other supporting evidence. This summary includes only the evidence items and conclusions drawn from them.

## **Criterion 1 Mission**

### **The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.**

The legislation that created Colorado Mesa University – Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 23-53-101– defines the University's current role and mission and serves as the centerpiece of the institution's commitment to its service region. The mission statement was revised in 2010 by the Colorado General Assembly and updated again in 2011 when Mesa State College was renamed Colorado Mesa University. The statutory statement was revised, yet again, in 2012 when CMU was approved by the Colorado Department on Higher Education to move to the selective admission standards category. The role and mission statement guided the 2010 development of the 2011 Strategic Plan (p. 8), and the current version that reflects the updates is found in both the Catalog (p. 7, col. 2) and CMU website, reads:

*There is hereby established a university at Grand Junction, to be known as Colorado Mesa University, which shall be a general baccalaureate and graduate institution with selective admission standards. Colorado Mesa University shall offer liberal arts and sciences, professional and technical degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs. Colorado Mesa University shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including career and technical education programs. Colorado Mesa University shall receive resident credit for two-year course offerings in its commission-approved service area. Colorado Mesa University shall also serve as a regional education provider.*

The necessarily brief legislative statement provides CMU with the statutory language required to define the guiding values of the institution as well as its vision for progress. The most recent articulation of CMU's Mission, Vision, and Values Statements comes from the institution's 2011 Strategic Plan and directs one's attention to the institution's public commitment to its students and other stakeholders. The University's academic programs, assessment processes, planning, and governance provide the necessary framework for successfully fulfilling the concepts expressed in these statements. Additionally, this framework is supported through institutional policies and procedures that encourage diversity of thought, cultural awareness, and a commitment to the public good. Collectively, the enabling legislation and the Mission, Vision, and Values statements define Colorado Mesa University and provide a vital context from which to assess its success and progress.

### **Core Component 1.A The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.**

- 1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and adopted by the governing board.**
- 2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.**
- 3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.**

The legislation that created Colorado Mesa University (CMU) is the foundation that defines the University's current role and mission and provides direction for all other associated statements. These documents have been developed systematically according to University procedures and formally adopted by the Board of Trustees. All University programs, along with academic and student support services, implement the commitments articulated in the Mission Statement and in the Vision, and Values Statements (2011 Strategic Plan, p. 8 and p. 13). Responses from faculty and staff surveys, conducted as part of the self-study process, point to an awareness of the University's Mission Statement.

CMU's articulated goals, objectives, and visionary documents provide a solid foundation for coordinating the efforts of each division and department within the University. These documents, however, are also flexible enough to allow faculty, staff, and students to adapt as circumstances change.

#### Evidence Items

1A1-1. The Mission Statement is legislated by the Colorado General Assembly and provides direction for the CMU Board of Trustees.

- 1A1-2 Institutional Vision and Values statements were developed collaboratively by a campus committee with broad representation from all areas of the institution.
- 1A2-1 CMU degree offerings and statements on philosophy and goals of education are consistent with the Mission, Vision, and Values statements of the institution.
- 1A2-2 CMU programs are consistent with its stated mission.
- 1A2-3 CMU's wide variety of student support services is in alignment with its mission to improve student success.
- 1A2-4 Enrollment data reflect CMU's attention to its 14-county service area.
- 1A2-5 Increasing numbers of ethnically diverse students support the ongoing mission of the institution.
- 1A2-6 Student demographics indicate CMU's attention to increasing greater participation of male students in higher education.
- 1A3-1 Annual budget requests by unit administrators must demonstrate how the request relates to CMU's strategic plan and goals.

**Core Component 1.B The mission is articulated publicly.**

- 1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.**
- 2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, religious or cultural purpose.**
- 3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.**

The age of information is booming with seemingly daily innovations and improvements to technology. No longer must parents drive their children to visit college campuses in order to find out what a campus has to offer. Instead, most prospective and current students utilize the internet to access information about academic possibilities, college life, and admissions. Therefore, it is vital that CMU has relevant information electronically available to the public.

Evidence Items

- 1B1-1 CMU provides clear access to its mission, vision, values, goals, and the 2011 Strategic Plan via its website and University Catalog.
- 1B2-1 The CMU mission and Vision and Values statements are current.
- 1B2-2 Institutional documents explain the emphasis of the University.
- 1B3-1 The University's Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, and Performance Contract identify what the institution achieves, the depth of its accomplishments, and who benefits from the institution's services.
- 1B3-2 Institutional mission documents do not clearly articulate differences in role, scope, and intended constituents between Colorado Mesa University and Western Colorado Community College.

**Core Component 1.C The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.**

- 1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.**
- 2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.**



In fall 2012, CMU administration, faculty, and staff welcomed nearly 9,500 students from across the United States as well as 25 foreign countries. Adding to the diverse geographic mix is the percentage of students who are the first person in their family to attend college and Pell eligible (41 percent). Nearly 25 percent of CMU students are 25 years of age or older; 45 percent are males. One-fifth of undergraduates reported themselves to be from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group (Fall 2012 Student Profile). Developing and sustaining diversity is an important component of the University, and institutional goals address this challenge.

#### Evidence Items

- 1C1-1 The institution has clearly articulated that it values diversity.
- 1C1-2 The 2010 Strategic Plan and the 2011 Performance Contract emphasize CMU's commitment to underserved populations.
- 1C1-3 CMU seeks to be reflective of the racial/ethnic composition of Western Colorado.
- 1C2-1 The University's governing board affirms a public commitment to a safe and diverse campus culture inclusive of all backgrounds.
- 1C2-2 Attention to diversity is apparent in the focus, support for, and actions of student services.
- 1C2-3. CMU faculty are engaged in teaching and researching diversity.

#### **Core Component 1.D The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.**

- 1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.**
- 2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.**
- 3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.**

For the purposes of this self-study the term "public good" is defined as outcomes that benefit the public rather than a purely private or profit interest of the University. The public good can be experienced by the local community of Grand Junction, in which the University is located, the larger 14-county region defined in the Mission Statement, the state of Colorado, and beyond. Serving the public good in this context means that CMU should and does contribute to the various communities in the region it serves. The University's Mission, Vision, and Values statements demonstrate a commitment to the public good through the mandates to be a regional education provider and the primary intellectual and cultural center of the region, the mandate to provide a wide variety of certificates, undergraduate and graduate degrees, and the commitment to a liberal arts education aimed at building up the capacity for a thriving civic society in the region.

#### Evidence Items

- 1D1-1 CMU plays a major role in the region's economy.
- 1D1-2 CMU demonstrates its commitment to the public good by remaining an accessible institution for higher education in the state of Colorado, particularly in its 14-county service area.
- 1D1-3 CMU's Office of Extended Studies and the WCCC Office of Community Education offer a diverse mix of programs to the public.
- 1D1-4 The CMU Tomlinson Library is a resource used by the public.
- 1D1-5 CMU demonstrates its commitment to the public good through cultivating an environment where faculty, staff, and students engage in community service.
- 1D1-6 CMU serves the public good by providing a venue for many different meetings, speakers, and performances.

- 1D1-7 CMU embraces its obligation to the public good through a cooperative strategy with regional agencies to share facilities and to host events.
- 1D2-1 There are no external interests that CMU supports.
- 1D3-1 CMU works with local groups and governing bodies to provide services responsive to regional needs.
- 1D3-2 CMU understands its responsibility to provide education that supports the economic and cultural needs of Western Colorado and responds by offering new programs.

### **Criterion 1: Conclusion, Strengths, and Recommendations**

Criterion 1 addresses the mission of the University. Questions are answered regarding the clarity, the development process, the availability, the utilization, and the consistency of CMU's mission and related statements within its academic processes, diversity, the University's role in this multicultural society, and its commitment to the public good. Portions of the body of evidence for this criterion come from the Vision and Values statements, the 2011 Strategic Plan, and the 2011 Performance Contract Report.

The list below summarizes some key University strengths and recommendations for improvement related to this criterion.

#### Strengths

- CMU's Mission, Vision and Values Statements and all other supplemental statements and documents are clear, vital to the institution and available to the public and provide a framework for the University's planning and budgeting processes.
- CMU offers accessible regional higher education for the public, is flexible in using alternative course delivery methods, and provides a diverse set of programs and certificates at the undergraduate and graduate levels, reflecting its responsiveness to the needs of Western Colorado.
- CMU is committed to its relationship with the community as a full and active partner with various businesses and government agencies.

#### Recommendations

- CMU should establish and clearly articulate the mission, role, scope, and intended constituents of its two-year division, Western Colorado Community College. Additionally, CMU should make clear how its two-year and four-year divisions are differentiated and integrated within the context of accomplishing the institution's overall mission.
- CMU should build on its current efforts and processes to actively recruit and retain faculty, staff, and students from all backgrounds to further enrich the diversity of the campus community. As CMU makes additional full-time faculty and staff hires, continued efforts should be made to find candidates from diverse backgrounds. The University should also move forward with setting goals for increasing enrollments from underserved populations and ensuring greater student success rates among the same. The University recognizes the value of enriching the campus community with increased diversity, and while there are active efforts to promote diversity at CMU, continuous attention is needed. In this regard, the University should direct additional efforts toward supporting a campus culture of respect and understanding among students, faculty, staff, and the community at large.

## **Criterion 2 Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct**

### **The institution acts with integrity: its conduct is ethical and responsible.**

Colorado Mesa University provides quality education and offers students opportunities to learn while operating in ethical and responsible ways. The institution conscientiously seeks to provide full disclosure of information to prospective and current students and to make explicit its requirements that all members of CMU's community shall act ethically. Full disclosure of information is provided to students and their families before students make commitments to CMU. Ethical practices and behaviors are expected at CMU, and infractions are handled according to institutional policies. Trustees govern in ways that enhance the well-being of the University, and CMU staff, faculty, administration, and students demonstrate accountability as they follow guidelines that are prescribed for the entire institution and/or specific programs. As a public institution, CMU follows additional guidelines provided by the State of Colorado.

Members of CMU's community endeavor to strengthen the institution, improve the clarity and flow of communications, and update policies that will help the University avoid misleading statements or practices. Ongoing efforts are made to recognize areas for improvement in the ways CMU fills its mission, in the ways it makes clear requirements for ethical practice by all members of the institution, and in the ways CMU represents itself to the public. This chapter shows that CMU, while embracing innovation, growing rapidly, maturing within its physical capacities, and embracing the identity of a university, continues to operate with fairness, accountability, and integrity.

### **Core Component 2.A The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.**

CMU operates with integrity in the financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary areas. Auxiliary functions are defined by The National Association of College and University Business Offices (NACUBO). CMU has well-established policies for overall governance and policies in place for each of the functional areas. CMU establishes policies for staff, faculty, administrators, and the governing board to operate with integrity in financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions. In addition, various external agencies require that fair and equitable policies be followed to meet their requirements for entities such as auxiliaries.

#### Evidence Items

- 2A-1 CMU's policies for the governing board, administration, and faculty clearly emphasize institutional integrity.
- 2A-2 CMU requires integrity within the institution's financial functions.
- 2A-3 CMU requires integrity within the institution's academic functions.
- 2A-4 CMU follows clear policies when performing the institution's personnel functions.

### **Core Component 2.B The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.**

This component is about transparency, about complete and clear information being provided for students and the public with regard to CMU's programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships. The word "completely" includes the utilization of multiple media tactics to deliver relevant and timely information that develops and maintains mutually beneficial relationships with the public. "Completely" also requires a communication style that is straightforward and inclusive, avoiding jargon or abbreviations, and acronyms. While conciseness is beneficial to help students and the public avoid information overload, no information can be missing that is needed for full disclosure.

CMU endeavors to ensure that anyone seeking information on CMU's website encounters user friendly and intuitive navigation tools. CMU communicates with an internal audience (on campus) inclusive of current students, faculty and staff, and an external audience composed of prospective students and parents, alumni, community members, vendors, and others interested in CMU. The University, through its media relations department, disseminates campuswide information in the form of press releases to inform the public of events, opportunities, and issues that either originate with the institution or may affect the institution or public. Social media platforms are utilized by departments and student groups to distribute information and to engage in interactive dialogue with the public.

CMU presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships. Further, CMU continues to improve the effectiveness of communications to internal and external audiences. CMU's website contains a wealth of readily accessible information.

#### Evidence Items

- 2B-1 Institutional and program requirements for students are easily accessed.
- 2B-2 The institution does not always present itself clearly and completely with regard to the relationship between the programs offered by Colorado Mesa University's four-year division and those by Western Colorado Community College.
- 2B-3 The institution presents itself clearly and completely with regard to information about the credentials of faculty and staff.
- 2B-4 The institution presents itself clearly and completely to students and the public with regard to costs to students.
- 2B-5 The institution presents itself clearly and completely regarding institutional control.
- 2B-6 The institution presents itself clearly and completely regarding accreditation relationships.
- 2B-7 Accessibility to information for all is a priority at CMU.
- 2B-8 CMU regularly informs the public regarding campus security.

#### **Core Component 2.C The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.**

- 1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.**
- 2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.**
- 3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.**
- 4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.**

The CMU Board of Trustees is charged with acting in the best interests of the institution. Additionally, the Board has considerable autonomy when it comes to making decisions. Prior to 2003, this institution was part of a State Colleges in Colorado system with Adams State College (now Adams State University), Western State College (now Western State Colorado University), and Metropolitan State College, (now Metropolitan State University of Denver). Since having its own governing Board concerned specifically with its best interests, CMU has grown substantially and upgraded the campus significantly. In a 2012 survey of faculty and staff administered as part of the self-study process, 60+ percent of CMU faculty and 70+ percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the institution is headed in the right direction and has significantly improved overall in the past five years.

The Board was expanded to 11 voting members, as of July 1, 2012, to give the membership greater depth and breadth, both geographically and functionally. Members are appointed by the governor of Colorado, vetted by the Office of Boards and Commissions which performs background checks, interviewed by the Department of Higher Education, and confirmed by the Colorado State Senate. They are, by definition, public members. Before they become Board members, they are advised of their fiduciary duties to the State of Colorado as well as to the institution. Trustees are chosen based on numerous factors such as sound financial background, fund-raising expertise, geographical considerations, ethnicity balance, gender balance, and a requisite political perspectives balance. The Board generally functions as a committee of the whole, but as needed, ad hoc working groups are convened to consider specific issues.

The CMU Board of Trustees consists of a diverse group of men and women who come with a wide range of backgrounds. Several Board members are lawyers, one is a senior judge, one is the president and CEO of Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Systems, two are CEOs of private firms, one is a retired accounting professional, and many have been integrally involved in public policy, particularly regarding public education. Many Board members also have substantial experience and success with fundraising. Common to all members of the Board is a dedication to community service and a wealth of leadership experience. Additionally, a non-voting faculty member, elected by the CMU faculty, serves on the Board to provide input, along with a non-voting student representative elected by the student body. Biographies of the Board members are available.

#### Evidence Items

- 2C1-1 The Board regularly engages in efforts to improve the institution.
- 2C1-2 CMU's Trustees' Policy Manual establishes that all Board deliberations need to promote institutional well-being.
- 2C2-1 The Board considers the relevant interests of constituents in their planning processes by involving a variety of internal and external stakeholders.
- 2C3-1 The Trustees' Policy Manual requires Board members to limit external entities' involvement in the affairs of the University.
- 2C3-2 CMU's governing Board is free from undue influence from donors to the University.
- 2C3-3 The Trustees are empowered to act in numerous ways on behalf of the University and are prohibited from engaging in conflicts of interest.
- 2C4-1 The governing Board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration.
- 2C4-2 The governing Board delegates the overseeing of degree programs to the faculty.

### **Core Component 2.D The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.**

The evidence provided in this section shows that CMU has policies and procedures in place to protect freedom of expression, particularly as it involves the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. No formal grievances have been filed related to academic freedom with the Human Resources Department since the current HR Director was hired in May 2005.

#### Evidence Items

- 2D-1 The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

### **Core Component 2.E The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.**

- 1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.**
- 2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.**

### **3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.**

CMU provides oversight and support for academic honesty. The University ensures that knowledge is acquired, discovered, and applied in responsible and ethical ways. Evidence is provided regarding oversight and support services, relating how CMU provides students with guidance on using information resources and how the institution supports academic honesty.

#### Evidence Items

- 2E1-1 CMU provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice.
- 2E2-1 Students are offered guidance and required to engage in the ethical use of information resources through policies provided by Student Services and academic departments.
- 2E2-2 Students are offered guidance and required to engage in the ethical use of information resources through policies provided and actions taken by the Information Technology staff.
- 2E2-3 Students are offered instruction on the ethical use of information resources by CMU's library staff.
- 2E3-1 Colorado Mesa University has clearly written policies regarding academic honesty and integrity.
- 2E3-2 The institution enforces academic integrity policies.

#### **Criterion 2: Conclusion, Strengths, and Recommendations**

Colorado Mesa University acts with integrity and conducts itself ethically and responsibly. The institution conscientiously seeks to provide full disclosure of information to prospective and current students, makes explicit its requirements that all members of CMU's community act ethically in all activities, and provides clear and comprehensive guidelines for the encouragement and enforcement of integrity across campus. Full disclosure of information is provided to the public and to students and their families before students make commitments to CMU.

Avenues of disclosure are varied, repetitive, comprehensive, and regularly updated. The Board of Trustees follows the Colorado State Code of Ethics and has a policy manual for governing in ways that enhance the well-being of CMU and its students. Policies and handbooks are regularly discussed and updated. CMU staff, faculty, auxiliaries, athletics, administration, and students display accountability as they follow guidelines prescribed by the institution, by programs, and by accrediting organizations. As a public state institution of higher education, CMU also follows policies and guidelines that originate as State of Colorado and/or federal statutes and mandates. Many of these procedures and publications are subject to regular public discussion and revision. The members of CMU's community continuously endeavor to strengthen the institution, to improve the clarity and flow of communications, and to update policies that will help the campus community avoid misleading statements or practices. CMU has several strengths in the area of integrity, as well as opportunities for improving integrity as the institution moves forward.

The list below summarizes some key University strengths and recommendations for improvement related to this criterion.

#### Strengths

- CMU follows clearly written policies and procedures that guide its personnel, students, and business decision-making processes.
- Students take an active role in determining the purposes, roles, and rates of student fees. The fees are made transparent to the student decision-makers.

#### Recommendation

- CMU should make clear to potential and current students which programs are delivered by CMU's four-year division and those that are offered by WCCC in all of its marketing materials, including the CMU and WCCC websites.

### **Criterion 3 Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support**

#### **The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.**

Colorado Mesa University takes great pride in providing educational opportunities that help students succeed in today's complex and interconnected world – in the classroom, online and at multiple locations in its service region. The University offers degrees at all levels, certificates through a doctorate. CMU's general education program engages students in the acquisition of broad knowledge and in the application of that knowledge in various intellectual-, civic-, and career-focused opportunities. CMU values teaching, learning, and student-faculty interaction. Faculty are highly qualified, are dedicated to teaching, and devote the majority of their time and energy to classroom excellence. Interaction between students and faculty is commonplace and enables faculty members to involve undergraduates in challenging research. Students are supported academically by a highly qualified staff, campus facilities that enhance learning, and a full range of services designed to help them achieve a higher degree of excellence. In-class instruction is supplemented by a variety of out-of-class opportunities including internships and fieldwork in Western Colorado and study groups that travel the globe.

#### **Core Component 3.A The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.**

- 1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.**
- 2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.**
- 3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).**

Colorado Mesa University is dedicated to creating and maintaining a learning community that prepares students for active and successful personal, professional, and civic lives. The University is focused on student learning to ensure achievement of student learning outcomes. CMU offers a wide array of academic programs in various modes and locations that serve not only its student body, but also the needs of the community.

#### Evidence Items

- 3A1-1 External evidence indicates that CMU's courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
- 3A1-2 Internal evidence indicates that CMU's courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
- 3A2-1 CMU articulates and differentiates learning goals for its programs through its Combined Curriculum Committee Policies and Procedures Manual, program sheets and syllabi, and in student learning outcomes for all certificates and degrees.
- 3A3-1 Processes are in place for establishing consistency in program quality and learning goals across all locations and modes of delivery.
- 3A3-2 CMU has developed and formally adopted a credit hour definition policy to establish consistency across all modes and locations of delivery.
- 3A3-3 Regular program review creates consistency.

#### **Core Component 3.B The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.**

- 1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.**

2. **The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.**
3. **Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.**
4. **The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.**
5. **The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.**

Colorado Mesa's Vision Statement for 2020 (2011 Strategic Plan (p.13)) asserts that the University...

*will be respected as a learning community that embraces diversity of students, faculty, staff, ideas, and degree levels, while maintaining a quality educational environment that focuses on serving its many constituents. As it assumes an expanded leadership role, CMU will expand its public engagement of the region's stakeholders by serving as the primary intellectual and cultural center and promoting the exchange of ideas that are of regional, national, and international importance.*

This section addresses the ways in which CMU pursues the fulfillment of that vision through both its general education program and its upper-division and graduate offerings. CMU's focus is on preparing students to thrive in a diverse, global environment, and its commitment is to active engagement in academic and civic arenas for the benefit of all its stakeholders.

#### Evidence Items

- 3B1-1 CMU's Vision and Values Statements articulate goals appropriate to its mission as a regional education provider that guide general education requirements.
- 3B1-2 The processes in place for vetting new general education course proposals ensure that general education courses are appropriate to CMU's mission.
- 3B1-3 CMU's general education program aligns with state expectations.
- 3B2-1 CMU articulates the purposes, content, and goals of undergraduate education requirements in its Catalog and reviews its general education curriculum and philosophy regularly.
- 3B2-2 CMU's general education program is grounded in a framework adapted from the American Council of Trustees and Alumni and the Institute for Effective Governance. Specifically, recent discussions about general education have been shaped by the report "Becoming an Educated Person: Toward a Core Curriculum for College Students."
- 3B3-1 The gtPathways criteria for statewide transfer of general education courses articulate requirements for collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Every content area also requires that students meet critical thinking competencies. CMU's general education courses, vetted by groups of faculty and administration across the state, engage students in these behaviors.
- 3B3-2 Specific courses in each program, beyond the general education requirements, also require students to collect, analyze, and communicate information.
- 3B3-3 At the associate level, students completing the general education requirements master modes of inquiry, based on the statewide gtPathways guaranteed transfer competency and content standards.
- 3B3-4 Programs demonstrate that mastery of modes of inquiry is a student learning goal through the construction of curriculum maps, through course syllabi, and through student research projects and presentations.



- 3B3-5 Statewide gtPathways guaranteed transfer competencies articulate a requirement for developing skills adaptable to changing environments. CMU's general education courses, vetted by groups of faculty and administration across the state, have demonstrated that they address these competencies and, therefore, must be working to engage students in these behaviors.
- 3B3-6 Applied Studies coursework and coursework in degree programs beyond general education requirements develop skills adaptable to changing environments.
- 3B4-1 CMU emphasizes human and cultural diversity within its curriculum.
- 3B4-2 CMU promotes awareness of the multicultural nature of the world by providing opportunities for study abroad for its own faculty and students and by actively recruiting students from other nations to study at CMU.
- 3B4-3 CMU enriches its educational offerings by emphasizing human and cultural diversity through a number of co-curricular activities.
- 3B5-1 CMU faculty have an impressive publication/performance record.
- 3B5-2 CMU students demonstrate their learning through performances, participation in academic conferences, publications, and various other venues.

**Core Component 3.C The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.**

- 1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members supported by effective structures to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; and involvement in assessment of student learning.**
- 2. All instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.**
- 3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.**
- 4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.**
- 5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.**
- 6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.**

Colorado Mesa University's faculty and staff are highly qualified and participate in the University's decisions and planning about teaching and learning at many levels, both in and out of the classroom. Because of the priority the institution places on teaching, faculty spend most of their time focused on the classroom. Teaching loads are 12 credit hours per semester for CMU faculty, and 15 credit hours per term for WCCC faculty. The University has met the challenge of keeping class sizes small in spite of the tremendous growth in the student body over the past several years. The institution evaluates all its instructors regularly according to established policies and procedures. It also provides funding for professional development for its instructors and staff, and it provides opportunities for professional development on and off campus for both instructors and staff. The institution has policies in place to ensure that instructors are accessible for student inquiry and exceed the minimum expectations in a variety of ways.

Evidence Items

- 3C1-1 The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty to carry out their classroom and non-classroom roles.

- 3C1-2 Continuous faculty growth has allowed CMU to keep class sizes relatively small.
- 3C1-3 Faculty members contribute significantly to learning in activities beyond the classroom.
- 3C2-1 Hiring procedures ensure that faculty members meet minimum criteria established by search committees.
- 3C2-2 Vitae of faculty indicate that CMU faculty are qualified.
- 3C2-3 Vitae of currently employed High School Scholars faculty indicate appropriate credentials for most instructors.
- 3C3-1 CMU's Professional Personnel Employment Handbook articulates a policy and process for regular tenure/tenure-track instructor evaluation.
- 3C3-2 Lecturers and instructors are evaluated annually based on established institutional procedures.
- 3C4-1 Faculty are supported in their scholarly and creative work and evaluated on it.
- 3C4-2 CMU faculty currency is supported through the Sabbatical Program.
- 3C4-3 CMU faculty currency is supported through Fulbright Scholar awards.
- 3C4-4 The institution provides professional development opportunities for its faculty.
- 3C5-1 Faculty hold regular office hours for interaction with students and provide other opportunities for student inquiry.
- 3C5-2 Several departments on campus offer group advising sessions, in addition to one-on-one advising with personal advisors.
- 3C5-3 Students highly rate the availability of instructors and advisors.
- 3C6-1 The Faculty and Administrative Search Procedure Manual ensures that staff meet the minimum qualifications established by search committees.
- 3C6-2 All administrative staff providing academic student support services are well qualified.
- 3C6-3 Staff members participate in additional training and certification and take part in professional development activities.
- 3C6-4 Training manuals and schedules for training sessions indicate conscious attention to staff preparedness and information awareness.

**Core Component 3.D The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.**

- 1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its students.**
- 2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.**
- 3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.**
- 4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).**
- 5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.**

CMU's administration, particularly the Vice President for Academic Affairs, has continuously sought ways to enhance student learning and improve student success over the course of the past several years. One of the most impressive efforts was the Working Group to Improve Student Success and its resulting reports and actions. The

University is committed to student success and satisfaction, and it has dedicated itself to serving students in all the ways it can – specifically, in terms of the following areas:

- Services tailored to very diverse needs.
- Placement that will ensure a positive outcome for learning.
- Advising to make sure the path to graduation and a career is clear.
- Facilities that are comfortable and functional.
- Ethical research practices.

As reported in the Fall 2012 Student Profile (p. 1), CMU had an enrollment of 9,482 students, with 12 percent of the University's student body coming from outside Colorado. The student population was 54 percent female and 46 percent male, and the vast majority of undergraduates – 75 percent – were enrolled in full-time study. Three of four students were traditional-aged students (defined as less than 25 years old), and 21 percent self-identified as a racial or ethnic minority. Many CMU students attend college while working and/or caring for families. Most of CMU's students – 65 percent – are pursuing bachelor's degrees, 23 percent associate degrees, 2 percent certificates, and less than 1 percent are pursuing master's and doctoral degrees. While less than 1 percent of the University's students are pursuing their degrees completely online, about 20 percent take one or more classes online or on another campus.

The University provides a wide variety of services to meet the needs of this diverse student body. Sub-component 3.D.1 addresses support offered through CMU's student services division, followed by Sub-components 3.D.2 and 3.D.3, which describe academic support services, such as advising and placement, as well as resources that enhance students' learning.<sup>3</sup>

#### Evidence Items

- 3D1-1 The University coordinates efforts to serve its students through the Office of Student Services.
- 3D1-2 The University provides transactional services for its students.
- 3D1-3 CMU provides for the health and recreation needs of its students.
- 3D1-4 The University provides personal, emotional, and developmental support for its students.
- 3D1-5 The University provides for the social and cultural needs of students.
- 3D1-6 CMU provides for the safety and security of its students.
- 3D1-7 Results from the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) indicate that CMU fulfills the needs of its students.
- 3D2-1 The University provides admission and placement support.
- 3D2-2 CMU provides preparatory instruction and on-going learning support to help students succeed.
- 3D2-3 The University provides learning support to students throughout their academic careers.
- 3D3-1 The Advising Center is staffed with qualified and knowledgeable advisors who work with entering students and students who have not declared a major.
- 3D3-2 Processes are in place to help students select a major in a timely fashion.
- 3D3-3 Recommended course sequencing offers students a plan for completing their majors.
- 3D3-4 Students who have declared a major are assigned an academic faculty advisor who assists them in the process of degree completion.
- 3D3-5 Faculty are available for student advising and are equipped with the technology for serving students efficiently.
- 3D3-6 CMU organizes a Major Fair and a Graduate Fair and three Career Fairs to provide information about the connections between academic disciplines and career opportunities.

- 3D3-7 Similar or equivalent services are available to students on CMU's Montrose and WCCC campuses.
- 3D3-8 The University dedicates staff to serving the special needs of its graduate students and provides opportunities for students to learn about and adapt to graduate school culture. Small class sizes and frequent and personal faculty advising promote student success.
- 3D4-1 Exemplary facilities can be found across disciplines and campuses. CMU facilities provide comfortable, convenient surroundings for students.
- 3D4-2 Collaborative planning enables the University to provide an infrastructure that supports the needs of campus stakeholders as the campus grows.
- 3D4-3 Tomlinson Library supports effective teaching and learning.
- 3D4-4 The University provides technology-enhanced teaching and learning environments that enrich the effectiveness of the educational experience for students.
- 3D5-1 The University has clearly defined and easily accessed research policies and procedures.
- 3D5-2 Courses in research methods are offered throughout the curriculum.
- 3D5-3 The Library User's Manual contains information about finding resources in the library. Several specific disciplines have research guides and tutorials that can be accessed from the Library's web pages.
- 3D5-4 Most CMU associate degree students and all baccalaureate students must take English 112, a course focused on researched writing.

**Core Component 3.E The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.**

- 1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.**
- 2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.**

One of the core values articulated in Colorado Mesa University's Values, Vision and Mission statements is the creation of a vibrant and varied campus setting that encourages involvement and interaction outside the classroom. Following this core value, students at CMU are provided with many opportunities to engage intellectually outside of classes. The University fosters involvement in civic affairs and encourages students to participate in exercise and outdoor activities to promote healthy living. CMU also creates co-curricular opportunities for students to expand their experiences with a variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious groups. The function of the Student Services Division was discussed in Sub-component 3.D.1, and many of the activities and services provided to CMU students were detailed there. In the following, co-curricular programs beyond those functions will be addressed. For this core component, co-curricular programs are defined generally as non-credit-bearing University-sponsored activities; however, Evidence Item 3E2-1 addresses some credit-bearing activities.

Evidence Items

- 3E1-1 The University is committed to providing opportunities for students to engage in various social, community-based learning activities outside the classroom.
- 3E1-2 CMU enhances classroom learning with practicums, internships, field experiences, and clinical assignments.
- 3E1-3 Student Life provides opportunities for traditional-aged students to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- 3E1-4 Student Life engages returning students and adult learners.
- 3E1-5 Student Life sponsors events that foster community participation.
- 3E1-6 The Honors Program is designed to involve exceptional students inside and outside of the classroom.

- 3E1-7 Students can join or be nominated for membership in several international and national honors programs.
- 3E1-8 Clubs devoted to promoting knowledge within certain disciplines are open to students.
- 3E1-9 CMU encourages students to make contributions to the community.
- 3E1-10 Co-curricular athletics, outdoor life, and community engagement are integral parts of campus life.
- 3E1-11 Co-curricular diversity activities and organizations are committed to educating the campus community about ethnic, religious, and cultural differences.
- 3E2-1 Student success, student engagement, and student satisfaction demonstrate that CMU delivers on its promises to its students.

### **Criterion 3: Conclusion, Strengths, and Recommendations**

CMU's degree programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate. The institution articulates appropriate learning goals for its certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate programs. The University has processes in place to monitor the quality of its programs and the consistency of its learning goals across all modes of delivery and all locations. CMU's general education program is appropriate to its mission, purpose, and content. Processes have been restructured to develop student learning outcomes for general education. CMU's degree programs engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information, as well as in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work, and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments. The institution's programs recognize human and cultural diversity.

The faculty and students of CMU contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge as is appropriate to their disciplines and the institution's mission, and faculty members are available for student inquiry. Faculty and staff are qualified to carry out their duties, and CMU has policies and procedures for evaluation of faculty and staff as well as opportunities for their professional development. CMU provides academic and student support services suited to the needs of its population, including academic advising, learning support, and preparatory instruction. It also has processes for directing first-time undergraduates to courses and programs for which they are adequately prepared. The University's infrastructure and resources adequately support teaching and learning, and students are provided with guidance in the effective use of research and information resources. Finally, CMU's co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to its students' educational experience. Taken as a whole, CMU fulfills the promises it makes to students with regard to its mission, vision, and values.

The list below summarizes some key University strengths and recommendations for improvement related to this criterion.

#### Strengths

- CMU's programs are rigorous and current.
- CMU's faculty and student body participate vigorously in scholarship activity.
- CMU faculty participation in service and committee work ensures that faculty expertise and input are integral to the decisions and policies of the institution.
- CMU maintains a safe and secure campus, which creates a welcoming and enjoyable environment for students.
- CMU has many programs and processes in place to optimize student success in terms of placement and preparedness for academic life.
- CMU provides excellent advising services for students.
- CMU has created a positive learning environment for its students by hiring and retaining highly qualified faculty, building and maintaining exemplary facilities, and developing and sustaining technology that supports effective teaching and learning.

#### Recommendations

- CMU and WCCC full-time faculty members not holding a degree at least one level higher than the courses they teach should have a professional development plan that leads to degree completion.
- CMU should better ensure the comparability, rigor, and consistency of courses taught in multiple modalities and at multiple locations, particularly those offered through the High School Scholars program. A “White Paper” was developed which contains recommendations for achieving consistency of courses. These recommendations were formally adopted by the Academic Council in spring 2012. Processes for ensuring implementation should be put in place. Methods should also be implemented to better combine the efforts of personnel at the WCCC campus with the academic department heads who have the responsibility for the courses being taught in the high schools.
- The University should develop an operational plan for the continued development of a more vigorous and inviting culture for its graduate students. CMU should coordinate application, admission, registration and financial aid processes for its graduate students in a centralized location with a dedicated staff. In addition, CMU should work to promote increased support for both faculty and students in graduate programs.

#### **Criterion 4 Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement**

**The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environment, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.**

Colorado Mesa University is dedicated to producing high-quality graduates ready for employment and further education in their respective fields. In addition to transcribing courses and assuring that student instruction is consistent no matter the method of delivery, the University utilizes processes to assure quality education: academic program review, the assessment of student learning, and annual ad hoc analyses of student success and satisfaction. From 2006 to 2011, the University required a periodic review of all programs and used the same type of assessment for both general education and program courses based on the ten general education goals.

In academic year 2011-12, the program review process was evaluated, leading to an expansion of the factors to be considered as part of the self-study. Additionally, the process evaluation led to the conclusion that the assessment of student learning outcomes, its accompanying reporting, and analysis of findings for program improvement should be integrated into program review. During that same time frame, institution-level student learning outcomes were developed, using the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile as a starting point. The institution-level outcomes, in turn, served as the framework for articulating program-level outcomes during academic year 2012-13. Assessment of general education courses has been suspended while a working group is reviewing the goals of general education and its methods of assessment, a process that began in January 2013. CMU is committed to demonstrating that its delivery of high-quality education is, in part, due to the collection and evaluation of information accompanied by substantial documentation. The process is geared to become increasingly systematic and more easily linked to the new mission statement of the institution.

Experiencing a modest downturn in student enrollments in 2005 and 2006, CMU took steps to increase not only recruiting but also retention and completion rates. Among the efforts was the work in academic year 2010-11 by the Working Group to Improve Student Academic Success (WGISAS) which concluded that changes were needed to address student success rates in both the academic and student services divisions of the institution. As a result of a variety of initiatives, enrollment at CMU has increased greatly, and the institution has seen incremental success in improving retention and completion rates.

#### **Core Component 4.A The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its programs.**

- 1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.**
- 2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning.**
- 3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.**
- 4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.**
- 5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.**
- 6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and AmeriCorps).**

Colorado Mesa University has maintained a high-quality delivery of education, in part, by reviewing academic programs on a scheduled basis and by conducting a comprehensive review of all programs in the past 10 years. CMU sets high standards for courses that the institution transcripts as well as credits transferred in from other institutions. Regardless of delivery method, the University takes responsibility for all credited courses. There are ten academic programs with specialized accreditation and/or external approvals, so CMU evaluates the success of its graduates, not only through graduate and employer surveys, but also through other state and national evaluative criteria.

#### Evidence Items

- 4A1-1 CMU uses regular program review as a basis for continuous improvement and planning.
- 4A1-2 An institutionwide, comprehensive academic program review was conducted in 2009.
- 4A2-1 All credits transcribed by Colorado Mesa University have been reviewed by curriculum committees, and transfer credits are evaluated by the Registrar's Office.
- 4A2-2 The organization evaluates nontraditional credits that it transcripts.
- 4A3-1 CMU has clear policies for accepting transfer credits from other institutions of higher learning, including international credits. Department heads have final approval of use of transfer credits to complete course requirements.
- 4A4-1 Prerequisite courses are evaluated by curriculum committees and enforced by the Registrar's Office.
- 4A4-2 The institution is responsible for the rigor of the courses taught in each academic program regardless of the method of delivery.
- 4A4-3 Expectations for student learning are determined by evaluation of learning outcomes at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- 4A4-4 Access to learning resources are available to all students, faculty and staff on every campus, in online delivery, and to students and faculty in high school courses.
- 4A4-5 Qualifications for all faculty are listed in the Employment Handbook. Faculty qualifications for CMU are defined for high school faculty teaching concurrent enrollment courses (dual-credit) who must meet specified degree requirements determined by the University. The University provides workshops and other resources to assist high school faculty in meeting requirements.
- 4A4-6 Policies are in place that outline the requirements for courses taught in the concurrent enrollment program.
- 4A5-1 The University has ten programs with specialized national accreditation and four programs with state review for certification or licensure.
- 4A6-1 Baccalaureate, associate, and certificate programs collect data on employment and continued education rates based on institutional and departmental surveys.
- 4A6-2 The institution publishes certification and licensing exam results, and reports on gainful employment for specific programs.

#### **Core Component 4.B The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.**

- 1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.**
- 2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.**
- 3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.**



**4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.**

Assessment of student learning at Colorado Mesa University has been ongoing since 1986, revised in 2002 and amplified after an HLC focused visit in 2006. Both general education and program-level assessments were conducted using the "10 goals of baccalaureate education". In the most recent cycle, data were collected and analyzed each year until fall 2011, when the process was suspended to revise and strengthen the assessment process. Using the Degree Qualifications Profile as a model, the University developed institution-level learning outcomes for all baccalaureate-seeking students and is now aligning program and course assessment with the institutional outcomes. New initiatives will include assessment of co-curricular activities for student learning. CMU follows good practice when assessing learning outcomes and faculty development workshops have focused on effective assessment and revision of these outcomes.

Evidence Items

- 4B1-1 CMU has a history of assessment of student learning.
- 4B1-2 CMU developed goals and assessment strategies for undergraduate and graduate degree programs.
- 4B2-1 The University assesses individual program learning outcomes with consistent methods of collection and analysis appropriate to the program.
- 4B2-2 Collection of assessment data in co-curricular student learning with reporting has been slowly progressing. Processes are being developed to make assessment consistent and useful.
- 4B3-1 Programs demonstrate "closing the loop" in course and program assessment.
- 4B3-2 The University utilizes feedback from post-graduation evaluations and WGISAS to improve program instruction and student learning satisfaction.
- 4B4-1 Faculty members are increasingly involved in assessment processes through curriculum mapping projects and the articulation and analysis of student learning outcomes.
- 4B4-2 A majority of CMU faculty members are involved in the assessment process.

**Core Component 4.C The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to its retention, persistence and completion rates in degree and certificate programs.**

- 1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.**
- 2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs.**
- 3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.**
- 4. The institution processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)**

Colorado Mesa University pays careful attention to the retention and completion rates of its students. The Board of Trustees, President's Office, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and other administrative staff receive regular updates on these rates, and the institution is held accountable for them through the Performance Contract with the State of Colorado. Because the institution has seen fluctuation in these rates, it has responded by implementing several programs and methods to help students continue and complete their education at CMU.

### Evidence Items

- 4C1-1 The CMU Board of Trustees is committed to increasing retention and graduation rates, particularly among underserved students.
- 4C1-2 The Strategic Plan points to implementation of programs to increase retention rates among diverse populations and aligns to the University's mission.
- 4C2-1 The University provides external reporting of retention and completion rates to IPEDS, NCAA, the Common Data Set, and college guide surveys.
- 4C2-2 The University analyzes retention, persistence and completion of students at all degree levels. The results are reported to departments, administration, and the Board of Trustees for assessment and planning purposes.
- 4C2-3 The institution utilizes the information on retention and completion from the National Center for Educational Statistics for strategic planning and budgeting.
- 4C2-4 CMU collects and analyzes internal data on the rate of graduates returning to the institution to further their education.
- 4C2-5 The University reviews graduation rates of athletes for NCAA reporting and evaluation of academic achievement.
- 4C2-6 The University performs student satisfaction surveys for retention and completion purposes.
- 4C3-1 Advising and Academic Services developed new academic and student support programs and has made revisions to existing departments to address the results of retention and completion rate data.
- 4C3-2 Program and department changes were developed or improved based on findings from WGISAS, Student Services, and through grant funding.
- 4C3-3 The University developed initiatives and services intended to enhance student engagement.
- 4C4-1 CMU utilizes the federal IPEDS definition for establishing criteria on student retention and completion; the University also uses internal methodologies for associate and certificate programs based on accepted statistical approaches.

### **Criterion 4: Conclusion, Strengths, and Recommendations**

Criterion 4 addresses program review, credit for course work, graduate success, assessment, retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Program reviews have been in place since 2007, and the process has recently undergone a revision. While general education and program assessment have been ongoing since 2006, revision to the current assessment methods is in progress. Information gathered from assessment has been beneficial to some programs; however, more documentation of course or program revisions as a result of assessment needs to occur. There also needs to be more consistency in reporting assessment of learning outcomes across all methods of delivery. Retention, persistence, and completion rates are under constant review by the institution. Experiencing a downward trend in those rates, CMU took measures to improve academics and services to enable students the opportunity to not only continue in their coursework but graduate and become gainfully employed and further their education in their chosen fields. The results have been significant improvements in retention and graduation rates.

The list below summarizes some key University strengths and recommendations for improvement related to this criterion.

#### Strengths

- CMU is committed to demonstrating the quality of education it provides for all of its students.
- CMU has integrated program review and assessment into the University culture.

- Positive changes in retention and completion rates resulted from the implementation of recommendations from the Working Group to Improve Student Academic Success.

#### Recommendations

- The University should continue its initiatives for involving all faculty members in assessment and for implementing program changes based on assessment outcomes. Faculty members will continue to develop assessment plans based on the program learning outcomes that were created in 2012-13. Departments will begin structured data collection in fall, 2013. The Assessment Committee has been tasked with critically reviewing all program assessment plans and working with programs to assure compliance. Revisions in the program review manual also include an enhanced assessment review process.
- CMU should work to connect assessment of student learning on the main campus more closely to assessment on the Montrose and WCCC campuses. Course assessment and evaluation also need to be expanded to include the High School Scholars Program.
- As CMU monitors assessment of program effectiveness in co-curricular activities, it should also continue to develop assessment of student learning in these areas. Both academic departments and academic and student service support offices will work in the curricular and co-curricular aspects of student learning. As assessment is strengthened across the campus, continuous improvement will be evident not only in academic areas but in the co-curricular areas, student services, and campus life as well

## **Criterion 5 Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness**

**The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.**

The long-term financial health of Colorado Mesa University has changed dramatically over the past decade. With a governing board appointed to oversee a single institution since 2003, CMU's trustees have worked to secure resources, organize structures, and implement processes that support and enhance the University's capacity to fulfill its role and mission. Faced with a budget deficit in fiscal year 2003-04, the new administration implemented a budgeting approach that recognized the shift in the University's funding from the State of Colorado to the student was accelerating. That recognition led to a series of initiatives that has broadened the financial base of the University and reduced budget inefficiencies. As is the case in many states, other sectors of the State's budget were growing while higher education's share was shrinking. In 2000, 44 percent of CMU's budget came from the General Assembly, a proportion that has dwindled to its current level of less than 10 percent. The financial scenario has been made even more challenging due to the University's commitment, as a regional public institution, to keep tuition and fee increases at their lowest possible levels.

In spite of these circumstances, however, the University has used its strategic planning process to keep budget priorities focused on CMU's core mission, thereby enabling it to expand and improve the quality of its educational offerings, give annual faculty and staff salary increases, renovate nearly every building on campus, build additional classrooms and residence halls, and invest heavily in technologies to support the work of faculty, staff, and students. Each step is an indication that the institution learns from its experiences and is effectively and continuously monitoring changes in its demographic, social, political, and fiscal environments. In sum, the University has moved forward by evolving into a nimble, adaptable organizational culture that is proactive and responsive to its opportunities and challenges.

### **Core Component 5.A The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.**

- 1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.**
- 2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.**
- 3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.**
- 4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.**
- 5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.**

Colorado Mesa University focuses its resource base on delivering high quality educational programs, reflected in its current investments and future goals. Plans for reduced reliance on state support, reserved tuition capacity for future years, a competitive pricing advantage, institutional flexibility with student financial aid packaging, growth in resident and non-resident enrollments, and strong operating margins all have positioned CMU to strengthen its resource base to meet the uncertainties of the future. As it adapts to both short-term uncertainties and expected longer-term reductions in state and federal funding, CMU has created an operating contingency that was nonexistent in 2003 and exceeded \$4 million in fiscal year 2011-12.

CMU has budgeted on the assumption that state funding will continue to decline below 10 percent of total revenues, and this assumption serves two purposes: it positions the University to manage financial self-sufficiency in a worst-case scenario, should all state funding be eliminated, and it guarantees the University "enterprise" status according to the Colorado Constitution, thus preserving future tuition/revenue flexibility for CMU's Board of Trustees. Under the Colorado Constitution, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) imposes artificial limits on the growth of government programs not considered to be separate "enterprises" of the state.

The unique role of colleges and universities and the diversity of revenue sources supporting their operations qualify most institutions as an “enterprise.” The evidence items presented in this core component are organized around four primary resource categories – fiscal, human/intellectual, physical and/or technology – and addressed in the context of the University’s goals as articulated in its 2011 Strategic Plan.

#### Evidence Items

- 5A1-1 CMU has sufficient fiscal resources to support its operations.
- 5A1-2 CMU successfully leverages a variety of fiscal resources.
- 5A1-3 CMU has sufficient human resources to support its operations.
- 5A1-4 CMU has sufficient physical resources to support its operations.
- 5A1-5 CMU has sufficient technology resources to support its operations.
- 5A2-1 CMU is an independent public university with no superordinate entity to which it disburses revenues.
- 5A3-1 CMU is guided by well-articulated, realistic strategic goals that provide context for identifying annual priorities.
- 5A4-1 CMU has established policies and procedures for hiring appropriately qualified and trained faculty and staff. CMU ensures that all hiring practices and processes are inclusive.
- 5A5-1 Budgets are monitored by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the Budget Director, with reports reviewed quarterly by the Board of Trustees.

#### **Core Component 5.B The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.**

- 1. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies - including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students - in the institution’s governance.**
- 2. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight for the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.**
- 3. The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff, and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.**

In 2003, the Colorado General Assembly restructured public four-year higher education by dissolving or modifying some college and university systems, essentially moving to a decentralized model. The system most affected by this reconfiguration was the State Colleges in Colorado (SCC), a system composed of four institutions, one of which was in downtown Denver and the other three in central and western rural Colorado. With the passage of House Bill 03-1093, then-Mesa State College was one of the four former state college institutions that were given their own Board of Trustees effective July 1, 2003.

As specified in Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) 23-53-101, the institution’s Board has full authority and responsibility for the control and governance of CMU, including finance, resources, academic programs, curriculum, personnel policies, admissions, and role and mission. Appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, the Board originally was comprised of nine voting members (later expanded to 11) from around the state. To exercise their authority appropriately, the Board has established policies designed to enable the trustees to perform their statutory responsibilities in a rational and systematic manner. Furthermore, the work of all higher education boards on policy matters, including that of CMU, is coordinated at the state level by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHHE). Within the University, the Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management, as well as internal governance of the University to the President.

The administration of CMU is organized by four vice presidents and four program directors reporting to the President as shown below. Further detail on the University's administrative structure is organized by division under the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Vice President for Student Services, the Vice President for Community College Affairs, the Executive Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment, the Director of Athletics, the Director of Development, and the Director of Strategic Initiatives.

#### Evidence Items

- 5B1-1 The CMU Board of Trustees meets regularly and interacts with stakeholders to solicit input prior to making decisions.
- 5B1-2 The President engages internal constituents in a variety of ways.
- 5B1-3 CMU faculty participate in shared governance through the Faculty Senate, recognized by the Board as the primary formal representative of the faculty to it and the administration.
- 5B1-4 The Vice President for Academic Affairs meets with the Academic Council twice monthly to discuss academic matters.
- 5B1-5 Classified staff members are represented in CMU governance and maintain open channels of communication with the administration.
- 5B1-6 The trustees and administration interact with students in multiple ways.
- 5B2-1 The Board of Trustees has depth and breadth of experience, and its members are well informed about the University.
- 5B2-2 The trustees fulfill their obligations as part of financial, academic, and legal/fiduciary governance.

### **Core Component 5.C The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.**

- 1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.**
- 2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.**
- 3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.**
- 4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.**
- 5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.**

Colorado Mesa University (CMU) engages in systematic and integrated planning that is guided by its 2011 Strategic Plan, developed in 2010 and approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2011. The plan was the result of the work of a 27-member committee representing the University's various stakeholders. Built around six broad institutional goals, the plan articulates a vision for CMU in the year 2020. The budget planning process, described in the evidence items for Sub-component 5.A.5, has direct links with the Strategic Plan, as do the technology and facilities plans.

#### Evidence Items

- 5C1-1 CMU's Strategic Plan articulates the University's mission, assumptions, values, and goals that serve as the context for annual budget planning activities.
- 5C1-2 CMU prioritizes resources annually according to its support for student success and effective instruction.
- 5C2-1 An in-depth assessment of student success led to planned changes in academic support and funding for new initiatives.

- 5C2-2 Results of academic program review provide the basis for improving instructional delivery as well as unit planning and budgeting.
- 5C2-3 Through the budgeting process, initiatives have been funded to strengthen assessment activities supportive of program improvements
- 5C3-1 CMU developed its 2005 and 2011 strategic plans with extensive involvement of internal and external stakeholders.
- 5C3-2 CMU's operational planning and improvements incorporate input from the campus community.
- 5C4-1 University administrators carefully monitor demographics that can potentially affect enrollments.
- 5C4-2 A multiyear planning and budgeting approach ensures that resources can support existing, as well as anticipated, needs of the University's infrastructure.
- 5C5-1 CMU plans for demographic shifts.
- 5C5-2 The University proactively plans and budgets for sustaining facilities and technology that are essential to the mission and operation of the institution.
- 5C5-3 CMU addresses globalization from a variety of perspectives.

**Core Component 5.D The institution works systematically to improve its performance.**

- 1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.**
- 2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.**

The culture of Colorado Mesa University (CMU) is one that emphasizes learning from all stakeholders of the institution in order to improve the performance of operational units as well as the entire institution. Improvements have come about, not only from formal reviews of policies and procedures, but just as importantly from recommendations by faculty and staff in offices across campus. The commitment to continuous quality improvement is consistent with an overall philosophy of supporting students to be successful in whatever ways are possible and placing a high priority on positive customer service by support units. Results from surveys document an improvement in student satisfaction that is illustrated by responses, such as: 1) 85 percent of seniors indicate they would choose CMU again if they were to make the decision again (National Survey of Student Engagement, p. 2, col. 2); and 2) students are made to feel welcome on this campus (Student Satisfaction Inventory, p. 3). The University's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) administers numerous surveys throughout the year and conducts data analyses for insights into what is working at the operational level and what is in need of improvement. Regular updates to the Board of Trustees, through tracking mechanisms such as the Success Matrix and Financial Dashboard, document performance at the institutional level for monitoring levels of success.

Evidence Items

- 5D1-1 CMU is a data-driven institution that routinely collects and analyzes its operational performance.
- 5D2-1 CMU continually improves its effectiveness, expands its capabilities, and extends its sustainability by learning from experiences at all levels of the organization.
- 5D2-2 Goals in the 2011 Strategic Plan reflect learning from experience.

**Criterion 5: Conclusion, Strengths, and Recommendations**

By focusing limited resources on improving quality in every area of campus, Colorado Mesa University has been transformed in recent years. Through conservative budgeting, strategic growth initiatives, and consistent engagement of internal and external stakeholders, the institution has been able to provide for quality programming

while preparing for future uncertainty. From turning an annual budget deficit into an annual budget contingency to transforming the physical plant of campus, Colorado Mesa University is well-positioned for future success.

The list below summarizes some key University strengths and recommendations for improvement related to this criterion.

#### Strengths

- The successful 2003 reorganization of CMU's governing structure resulted in CMU having its own Board of Trustees and yielded many benefits for the institution. The Board of Trustees provides appropriate oversight in financial, academic, legal, and fiduciary matters.
- CMU has been able to successfully navigate the highly changeable and challenging resource environment of the past decade and improve its outcomes and performance.
- The CMU Strategic Plan was developed by broad constituencies and guides the planning and operations of the institution. The Strategic Plan is revisited on a regular basis. Campus-wide planning activities are linked to and driven by the Strategic Plan.
- CMU works systematically to improve its operational performance. By implementing strategies for improvement, the institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability.
- CMU has made substantial investments in new facilities and technologies to enhance instructional delivery.
- Faculty, staff, students, and external constituencies have multiple means of formal communication with the Board of Trustees and the administrative members at CMU.
- CMU's budget process follows the guiding principles related to the University's priorities and strategic initiatives.

#### Recommendations

- CMU should appoint a working group that represents the stakeholders of CMU, WCCC, and the Grand Valley Board of Cooperative Educational Services to evaluate the successes, challenges, and future of the University's two-year division, Western Colorado Community College. Once the future framework is established, a strategic plan that guides subsequent operational planning and budgeting for WCCC should be developed.
- As the University plans for future full-time hires, it should balance the needs for additional staff positions, resulting from the recent significant growth of the institution, with those for faculty members.
- CMU should implement a process for formally evaluating and prioritizing future technology investments using a business model that leverages campus-wide solutions, takes advantage of economies of scale, and aligns expenditures with strategic initiatives. The process should assist with assessing technology solutions, scheduling projects within staff resources, and allocating campus resources within the broader institutional goals.



## **Conclusion - CMU Moving in the Right Direction**

As expected, the self-study has revealed a great deal about the various facets of the institution and the ways they interact. In doing so, it has reminded many at CMU of the accomplishments being realized every day and has fostered satisfaction among the University's faculty and staff. This is reflected in recent survey data that show a majority of CMU employees are satisfied being a part of this institution. The survey data also show that most CMU employees believe that CMU has significantly improved over the last five years and is also currently heading in the right direction as it moves forward. The spirit of enthusiasm for applying new ideas, building on our successes, and advancing together will surely lead to continued success and continuous improvement at Colorado Mesa University.

Specific institutional strengths are described throughout this report and listed at the end of each criterion chapter. Examination from a wider perspective has revealed how many of these strengths work together to make CMU an effective institution that delivers rigorous, yet accessible, programs to a wide variety of students. Effective academic programs, and the services necessary to support them, are recognized as the foundation of the University. Programs and services are supported by student and faculty scholarship, active collaboration in academic planning and decision-making, and information sharing by the many components of the institution. CMU's close ties to the community and its clear and public statements about its nature and purpose have helped the University to increase regional accessibility via multiple modes of course delivery and variety in the program options it offers. All of this has been made possible, even through economically challenging times, by a clear strategic vision, sound fiscal planning, and the effective leveraging of traditional and non-traditional resources.

It is clear that the University is not only fulfilling its mission with integrity, but that it is also well-positioned to face the social, technology, and demographic changes that may challenge CMU in the future. CMU is confident in requesting re-affirmation and anticipates the opportunities for growth that will be afforded the institution as it moves forward.



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