

Advancing

the Quality of Learning

Accreditation Self-Study 2004 Executive Summary

Self-Study Purpose

The primary purpose of the Self-Study Report is to apply for continued accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, presenting patterns of evidence that demonstrate that Colorado State University (CSU) meets all five of the HLC accreditation criteria. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the major findings and conclusions presented in the Self-Study Report. This exercise provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional policies, procedures, and practices; to highlight strengths; and to identify opportunities and challenges. CSU is also seeking general approval from HLC to offer online delivery of distance degree programs and certificate programs. The full Report is available at www.accreditation.colostate.edu.

Self-Study Process

The self-study process began in May 2002, with appointment of a Steering Committee and nine subcommittees by the Provost with representation from administration, faculty, administrative professionals, state-classified staff, and students. Subcommittees gathered information, analyzed findings, and submitted draft reports related to each HLC criterion. Through this process, the Steering Committee and subcommittees were able to identify best practices in higher education that could advance the quality of learning. The Co-ordinators prepared the Self-Study Report from the subcommittee drafts and additional institutional data and documents, incorporating discussion and guidance from the Steering Committee and other constituents. Campus review and input were solicited in November 2003.

Summary of Accomplishments

CSU has made tremendous strides over the past decade. Examples of its many accomplishments include:

- CSU has become the “university of choice” within Colorado, enrolling 19,633 Colorado residents in Fall 2003 and reaching the highest-ever campus enrollment of 25,042 students.
- In AY03, CSU granted 3,998 bachelor’s degrees, 1,027 master’s degrees, and 182 doctoral degrees. The Professional Veterinary Medicine program awarded 132 DVM degrees.
- CSU has been repeatedly ranked in the top third of public universities in terms of affordability and educational quality.

Mission Statement

By statute, Colorado State University is a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. Charged with offering a comprehensive array of baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral programs, it holds exclusive statewide authority for programs in agriculture, forestry, natural resources, and veterinary medicine.

Colorado State University has a unique mission in the state of Colorado. The land-grant concept of a balanced program of teaching, research, extension, and public service provides the foundation for the University teaching and research programs, Agricultural Experiment Station, Cooperative Extension, and Colorado State Forest Service. The University has long been a leader in recognizing the rapidly changing global environment, and has a commitment to excellence in international education in all its instructional, research, and outreach programs. The University continues to make education and training accessible to deserving applicants from all classes and groups, and maintains a wide range of research, extension, and public service programs in response to the needs of the people of Colorado, the nation, and the world.

CSU's Program Aims:

To provide:

A high-quality undergraduate experience;

High-quality graduate education programs;

An environment conducive to excellent faculty and student research, scholarship, and artistry; and

Outreach programs responsive to the educational and developmental needs of all University constituencies.

CSU's Process Aims:

To assure:

The growth and development of university students, staff, and faculty;

Full participation of individuals from the pluralistic society in which we live as equal partners in the life of the University; and

The material and financial resources needed to achieve all of the University's aims.

- A coherent and rigorous All-University Core Curriculum was implemented for all undergraduate students.
- CSU is one of the leading public research universities in the United States, awarded approximately \$157 million from contracts, grants, and governmental sources in FY03, and expected to exceed \$200 million soon.
- Recently CSU was awarded \$22.1 million by the National Institutes of Health to construct a Regional Biocontainment Laboratory and \$17 million from the National Science Foundation to establish an Engineering Research Center.
- Recognition of University Distinguished Professors and University Distinguished Teaching Scholars has reinforced CSU's pursuit of excellence in accomplishing its purposes.
- Eleven CSU programs have now been designated Programs of Excellence by the Colorado Commission of Higher Education.
- More than \$405 million has been invested in facilities and major equipment over the past eleven years to renew the campus physical environment.
- The University was ranked by *Yahoo* magazine as the "most wired" university in the State of Colorado and 42nd in the nation.
- CSU continues to fulfill its land-grant mission through a variety of programs and service activities. Cooperative Extension made more than 1.6 million educational contacts with Colorado residents in the past year alone.
- CSU emerged from the July 1997 flood as a stronger and better institution, using recovery funds to address institutional priorities and contemporary needs of students.
- CSU has established 21 endowed chairs and professorships to add strength to academic programs, and engaged in successful campaigns and initiatives to renovate the Library, create the Students First Scholarships, and enhance other critical research and instructional programs.
- Total annual gift dollars have increased from approximately \$11 million to \$62 million.
- The two largest cash gifts ever received by CSU were made in the past two years. The designation of ten Monfort Professors is the centerpiece of the Monfort Family Foundation \$5 million gift, and the Bohemian Foundation gift of \$20.1 million includes a commitment to the University Center for the Arts and the renovation of Hughes Stadium.

Self-Study Report: Major Findings

The Self-Study Report presents patterns of evidence showing that CSU meets all HLC criteria for reaccreditation.

Criterion 1. *The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.*

- CSU has clearly stated purposes that provide Colorado citizens and students access to a comprehensive graduate research university that is student-centered and committed to excellence.
- CSU takes great pride in its land-grant tradition of balanced activities in teaching, research, and outreach.

Criterion 2. *The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.*

- CSU has effectively organized and utilized its resources consistent with an institution-wide commitment to excellence.
- To accomplish its purposes, CSU has remained true to its stated decision-making criteria with an emphasis on quality.
- Reallocation of resources to enhance academic programs and student learning have occurred on a consistent basis.
- CSU has excellent physical facilities, strong and advancing Libraries, and well-integrated information and instructional technologies that support the accomplishment of its purposes.

Criterion 3. *The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.*
Undergraduate Education:

- CSU provides a comprehensive array of undergraduate programs that are strong, relevant, and intellectually rigorous.
- As a “learner-centered” university, CSU’s undergraduate programs challenge students to develop proficiency in skills and competencies essential for all college-educated adults.
- The All-University Core Curriculum has a focus on learner outcomes, emphasizes life-long learning, and integrates core themes throughout a student’s entire program of study.
- CSU provides high quality academic and student support services that facilitate students’ academic, intellectual, and social growth.
- Faculty and staff are dedicated and effective in creating a learning environment that engages students and provides opportunities for all students to succeed.

Graduate Education:

- CSU provides outstanding graduate programs that effectively serve student and societal needs.
- Responsiveness to changing needs has been demonstrated by adapting programs and policies, without compromising the quality or integrity of graduate degree programs.
- Many of CSU’s graduate and professional programs have national and international reputations for excellence and innovation.
- Growth in CSU’s master’s degree programs has been stronger than national trends and peer groups.

Research, Scholarship, and Artistry:

- The University has well-established and emerging research programs of international distinction that attract significant levels of funding through grants and contracts.
- The designation of Programs of Research and Scholarly Excellence has served the University well by identifying model programs and priority areas of research for focused support.
- Many CSU faculty have received professional recognition and awards for the exceptional quality of their research and scholarship.

Outreach:

- CSU fulfills its land-grant mission through a broad array of outreach activities relevant to today’s rapidly changing society.

CSU Is Committed to:

- *Excellence*
- *Academic Freedom and Integrity*
- *Shared Governance*
- *Integrated Learning*
- *Research, Scholarship, Artistry, and Graduate Education*
- *Outreach*
- *Community*
- *Diversity*
- *Internationalism*

Carnegie Classification

CSU is classified as a “Doctoral/ Research Universities-Extensive” by the Carnegie Classification, the highest-level category for doctoral/ research institutions.

*The accreditation process will culminate with the HLC Evaluation Team Visit scheduled for **February 23-25, 2004**. HLC is a Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602-2504; www.ncacihe.org.*

- Outreach activities include interdisciplinary efforts and partnerships that support educational opportunity, promote economic development, enhance the quality of life, and serve the public interests of the citizens of Colorado.
- CSU outreach uses its expertise to address local, state, and global issues and to serve diverse and disadvantaged populations.

Criterion 4. *The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.*

- CSU has a lengthy record of established strategic planning and program review processes.
- The University has developed a comprehensive planning process that integrates plans from all sectors of the campus into the cycles of planning and budgeting.
- The University is improving its educational effectiveness through a process of systematic and comprehensive outcomes assessment.

Criterion 5. *The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.*

- CSU is recognized as a leading character-building university with unique programs designed to promote civic responsibility in students.
- The University community is proactive in informing students of their rights and responsibilities. Policies regarding student behavior and professional conduct by faculty and staff are clear and easily accessible.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Self-Study Report identified challenges and opportunities that require institutional focus and action, including:

- Determining how best to use limited financial resources to effectively meet increased demands.
- Funding CSU's administrative and academic support services at levels consistent with peer institutions and national benchmarks.
- Maintaining a high-quality, full-time faculty to assure quality in educational programs and to accomplish all components of CSU's mission.
- Continuing to strengthen the systematic and continuous assessment of student academic achievement for program improvement.
- Continuing to invest in graduate education and increase graduate student support to remain competitive.
- Compiling comprehensive information on outreach and its impact to provide increased access and visibility.
- Coping with the challenges and uncertainties in the level of General Fund support provided by the State of Colorado in future years.
- Addressing the reductions in state-funded financial aid that limit the University's ability to provide disadvantaged residents with access to education.
- Establishing an integrated and strategic process for development of clear enrollment goals, given the current combination of enrollment growth and limited resources.
- Accelerating the pace of accomplishment of diversity goals.

Conclusions

The last decade at CSU has been marked by significant accomplishments. Despite external challenges from natural disasters and the constraints associated with State funding, the University has optimized opportunities, turned adversity into advantage, and maintained a focus on the future while dealing effectively with current challenges. Institutional advances have occurred within a well-defined framework of priorities, guided by the strategic planning process. A decade of stability in University leadership and continuity in planning has provided the context for building excellence and advancing the quality of learning. The Self-Study Report demonstrates that the University operates at a level of excellence that meets or exceeds all requirements for accreditation. CSU is well-positioned to address the challenges and opportunities of the next decade.