

V. Looking to the Future

There is no single indicator that measures the full impact of Mesa State College on its 14-county region. As this report documents, however, indicators within an educational, cultural, and economic framework enable one to begin an assessment of the college's contributions. Further, the college will continue to have a significant impact on the future economic development of the Western Slope as it expands educational programming to meet its regional education provider responsibilities.

The college's range of academic degrees—from vocational certificates to graduate programs—enables Mesa State to respond to a diversity of educational needs. These will lead ultimately to higher levels of educational attainment and, in turn, increase the earning ability of its area's residents. The college's cultural, social, and outreach functions are impressive and greatly enhance the region's quality of life. Beyond that, they affect how attractively businesses view Western Colorado as a potential site in which to locate. Equally important is the short-term impact that the college has on the economic activity in the region—estimated to be \$144 million—an amount great enough to support an additional 477 jobs.

What makes these accomplishments even more impressive is that the college does all of this and more with fewer resources than virtually any other four-year public institution in Colorado. For FY 2003 – 04, the college's allocation per full-time equivalent student from the state was among the lowest of Colorado's 13 four-year public institutions. Of equal importance, the college delivers these academic programs and support services with a very low proportion of its budget spent on administrative costs and one of the most affordable tuition rates in the state.

In 2004, the institution entered a new era: the Board of Trustees completed its first year of governance, a new president was selected, the college implemented activities associated with its regional education provider designation, and the institution shifted closer to fiscal flexibility as an enterprise in 2005. The challenge to the college community will be how it embraces these and other changes and builds on its strengths to achieve yet a higher degree of leadership in Western Colorado. ■