

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Colorado Mountain College

### Project Details

<b>Title</b>	IMPROVE ACCESS for CMC LEARNERS	<b>Status</b>	COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	Any Category	<b>Updated</b>	09-14-2006
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b>	10-14-2006
	<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b> 05-06-2002	<b>Created</b>	11-23-2009
	<b>Actual Completion</b>	<b>Version</b>	3

### 1: Project Goal

- A:** This goal is to improve access for all learners and achieve at least a 14% participation rate in our communities, while in the midst of rapid population growth and rapidly changing needs of learners. Access means that learners (current and potential) can access classes and educational services through a variety of methods and in a variety of locations.

### 2: Reasons For Project

- A:** Census data show tremendous growth in the CMC District. District and service area counties have grown from 115,586 in 1990 to 181,633 in 2000, a growth rate of 57%. Growth rate among CMC counties ranges from a low of 1.7% in Jackson County to 171.5% in Summit County. Minority population has doubled in the same time period, from approximately 22,400 in 1990 (19% of the District & service area population) to 44,800 in 2000 (about 25% of the total). Access can be measured through community participation rate, it can be measured through participation in different delivery methods, and it can be measured through different methods of accessing services. This goal is one of our vital few because access is at the heart of our role and mission. We have offices in most communities in the CMC district, and have long committed resources to making sure students have access. With growth in our communities, both in numbers and in diversity, we are committed to improving access for all learners.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

- A:** Full-time Faculty, Community Faculty, Division Directors, The Learning Council, Information Technology, Institutional Research, Small Business Development Center, Marketing

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

- A:** § Training and retraining faculty and staff Working with area businesses and industries Learning about best practices among the CMC campuses and from other institutions Strategic Planning and environmental scanning monitoring what's going on in out communities; identifying internal and external access needs Clarification of research parameters to measure participation rate

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

- A:** Deans will hold twelve focus group sessions each year to ask about community needs. Intranet resources will be used to engage the college community in access issues. Community surveys will be conducted at all seven campuses.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

- A:** Delivery methods: CMC delivers 94% of its instruction through traditional, classroom methods (based on total FTE for all courses for 2000-2001). Telecourses account for about 5% of the total, and enrollment in IVS courses makes up the remaining 1%. On-line courses, both CMC's capstone and other web courses, and CCCOnline courses, are in their infancy. Students report difficulty making their schedules work between work, home, and school. The College Board study recommends offering more on-line courses. Tracking on-line elements of traditional courses will be part of this project. Services: Students are tied, at present, to pencil and paper methods of registration. Part of the new administrative software upgrade will make it easier to access services electronically. Promotion and monitoring of this type of access is part of this project.

## 7: Project Outcome Measures

- A: 1. Clarification and monitoring of participation rates, tied to US Census data, to include subgroups such as County, ethnic groups, age breakdowns, income groups, etc. 2. Increased number of courses offering an on-line component. 3. Increased number of opportunities for community participation, including such areas as professional development trainings.

## 8: Other Information

- A: Provide in-service education around access issues at all Campuses. Double the number of educational courses with on-line components. Increase participation rates in Grand and Chaffee Counties.

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A: A 3-year cycle of community surveys will be completed in 2007 and the data are being used to increase our responsiveness to community needs. The Aspen Campus survey was completed in the past year (English & Spanish versions) and Timberline's is currently in progress. Over 65% of the respondents in Aspen Campus' communities had taken classes at CMC and these classes helped enrich their lives, reach their personal goals, improve their work performance, learn a new language, and meet people and network. The surveys have been helpful with determining offerings, scheduling, and how well we're reaching our constituents. CMC already has numerous partnerships with business, industry, and other educational entities e.g. oil and gas industry (which has generously supported CMC's efforts) and offers classes that meet their training needs. Regular input is sought from campus advisory groups. On-line registration is available for returning students and its use has been steadily increasing over last year. Our distance education is continuing to grow. With the arrival of our new Chief Information Officer, an E-Communications taskforce is working on improving the functionality of our Website and our other technology-related (e.g. wireless access) initiatives. With the help of a facilitator, branding at CMC has been examined more closely by Marketing and a district-wide community poll was conducted recently to determine our stakeholders' perception of CMC. A new site was built in the past year to serve Chaffee County residents, as well as the Department of Corrections. Other new state-of-the-art campuses/buildings are planned for 2007 and 2008. Construction for a new Rifle Campus and a Timberline library has begun, with Summit Campus to follow. Kiosks have been placed at campuses. eNews (64% increase in use over the past year), listserves, and the Website (over 1,600 visitors/day with a 22% increase in use of the online catalog over the past year) are increasingly used by all stakeholders. The President has created taskforces that are providing recommendations for the further development of allied health programs and workforce training based on community needs. After studying tuition and costs, CMC has been fiscally responsible with costs and managed to keep its tuition the lowest in the state (\$43/credit hour for in-district residents). Each year, more than \$5 million in financial aid is awarded to CMC students. Campuses and Foundation have access-related initiatives underway: mining summit, more accessible/varied dual enrollment, focus groups with area stakeholders for training-related feedback, training for oil/gas industry, cafeteria plan of training/educational programming, HERO (at over \$750,000) and other scholarships/grants (e.g. TRIO), many for Latino students. Improving access became one of our four college wide strategic planning goals. Although our overall 2006 participation rate is 13.2% (nearly 5 times the state benchmark of 2.7%) and we have passed our target of 20% for overall ethnic minority enrollment (currently 23%), this goal needs work, since many of the minority students were only in ESL/GED courses. Using best practices observed during visits to Moraine Valley & Valencia, as well as other research and knowledge, the Sponsor for this project (our Chief Student Development Officer) has spearheaded access-related efforts, so that CMC's student population will better reflect the CMC service area demographics, with the ultimate goal being to increase to 18% the college wide participation rate of Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in non ESL/GED college courses. After this summer's Administrative Leadership Team retreat, where about 50 College representatives brainstormed about our AQIP and the direction of the College with our President and a continuous improvement facilitator, we are working on becoming more systematic on how we target areas for improvement, as well as use continuous improvement tools and data. We are now a participant in the National Benchmark Project and will use their forthcoming benchmark participation rate to reevaluate the 14% target.

### 2: Institution Involvement

- A: The focus on becoming a Learning College and continuous improvement has helped increase involvement. Continuous improvement related initiatives reflected one of the four college wide strategic goals. Training in using continuous improvement tools has been provided fairly regularly, with a quality facilitator training the Administrative Leadership Team this summer. This representative

leadership responded (both at the training and in a subsequent survey) very enthusiastically to moving forward in an even more systematic and focused way. CMC's culture continues to change because of this, as well as retirements and new hirings. This is still impacting everything, particularly how we conduct ourselves daily with students, the community, and one another. With strong teams at the campuses and District Office, there has been increased collaboration across and within areas. For example, campuses work with District Office to develop their community surveys and then volunteers from the College and external community help with the administration. Strategic Planning that is tied to Board Ends, College goals and AQIP goals has become more systematic and data based all the way to employee goal setting through our new employee evaluation system, with improving access targeted throughout. Enrollment Management, Public Information & Marketing have been collectively working with campuses to develop and implement more targeted plans for getting information to their students and communities. Another key to involvement can be credited to the work of the AQIP Access Team and the various Diversity Action Teams, which have college wide representation and are lead by our Chief Student Development Officer. Considering the spread of our many sites, this is no small feat. They have given direction to access-related campus and functional area initiatives. They presented their progress to the College leadership and developed an annual report that was disseminated college wide. After reviewing their data (e.g. CMC Hispanic participation rate for credit courses at 11% in 2005), they have begun to implement their 2006-07 strategic initiatives e.g. increase Spanish presence in brochures, the Web, etc.

### 3: Next Steps

- A: CMC has made great progress on this project. We have further refined the current broad goal of Access and become more focused with our initiatives through the AQIP Access Taskforce and Diversity Council. These groups will lead the College using their 2006-07 strategic plans. At our leadership meetings in the coming weeks, we hope to streamline processes for AQIP projects. Following the completion of this refinement process, the project details will be updated on the AQIP Website.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A: We have effectively used data to become more focused in our approach to access. The AQIP Access Team and Diversity Council studied demographics and determined a target for increasing credit course participation rate of Hispanic high school graduates. This is a big step for CMC, as the College has historically not consistently used data based decision-making.

### 5: Project Challenges

- A: Due to the various sites being so spread out over Western Colorado and a rather spread thin employee base, systems thinking, cohesiveness, and balancing consistency versus unique needs across sites and their communities continues to be a challenge. Collaboration and communication has improved tremendously, but much progress still needs to be made in this area. We struggle with gaining even greater involvement, since the same people tend to serve on numerous committees. This is improving with the more focused approach and improved assessment and strategic planning (better alignment of budgeting and planning processes) currently underway. The CMC culture is increasingly moving to data based decision-making and creating a culture of evidence for learning and continuous improvement. With our relatively new Information Management System, it is still sometimes challenging to effectively track students e.g. ESL to credit, but with our new Chief Information Officer, we are working on improving data access and training. Transition and exciting changes are continuing at CMC and we are still working on targeting some inefficient processes.

### 6: AQIP Involvement

- A: Momentum is currently strong with this project; however, we will likely seek some guidance at our 2007 AQIP Quality Check-Up Visit.

## Update Review

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A: Congratulations on a very large complex project! This project is a perfect fit for both Understanding Students' and other Stakeholders' Needs, Building Collaborative Relationships as well as Continuous Quality Improvement. You have accomplished a great deal with this project and have made remarkable inroads with your surrounding constituents.

### 2: Institution Involvement

**A:** Great job both on implementation and follow-up. It is a sign of how well the college has institutionalized this project that the yearly strategic initiative reflects important outcomes for ongoing assessment.

### **3: Next Steps**

**A:** Again, good job. Well thought out, good implementation.

### **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** I believe you have made great strides in challenging and changing your culture. I would love to see you present at a future strategies forum to share the successes and setbacks of this project.

### **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** Success breeds success. Now that you have tied budgeting to these initiatives college constituencies will more readily see the benefits of being onboard. Broader participation in campus committees is always difficult, with those already committed shouldering the lion's share of the work. Faculty and staff incentives, extra holiday, gift certificates, release time, might be ways of sparking interest.

### **6: AQIP Involvement**

**A:**