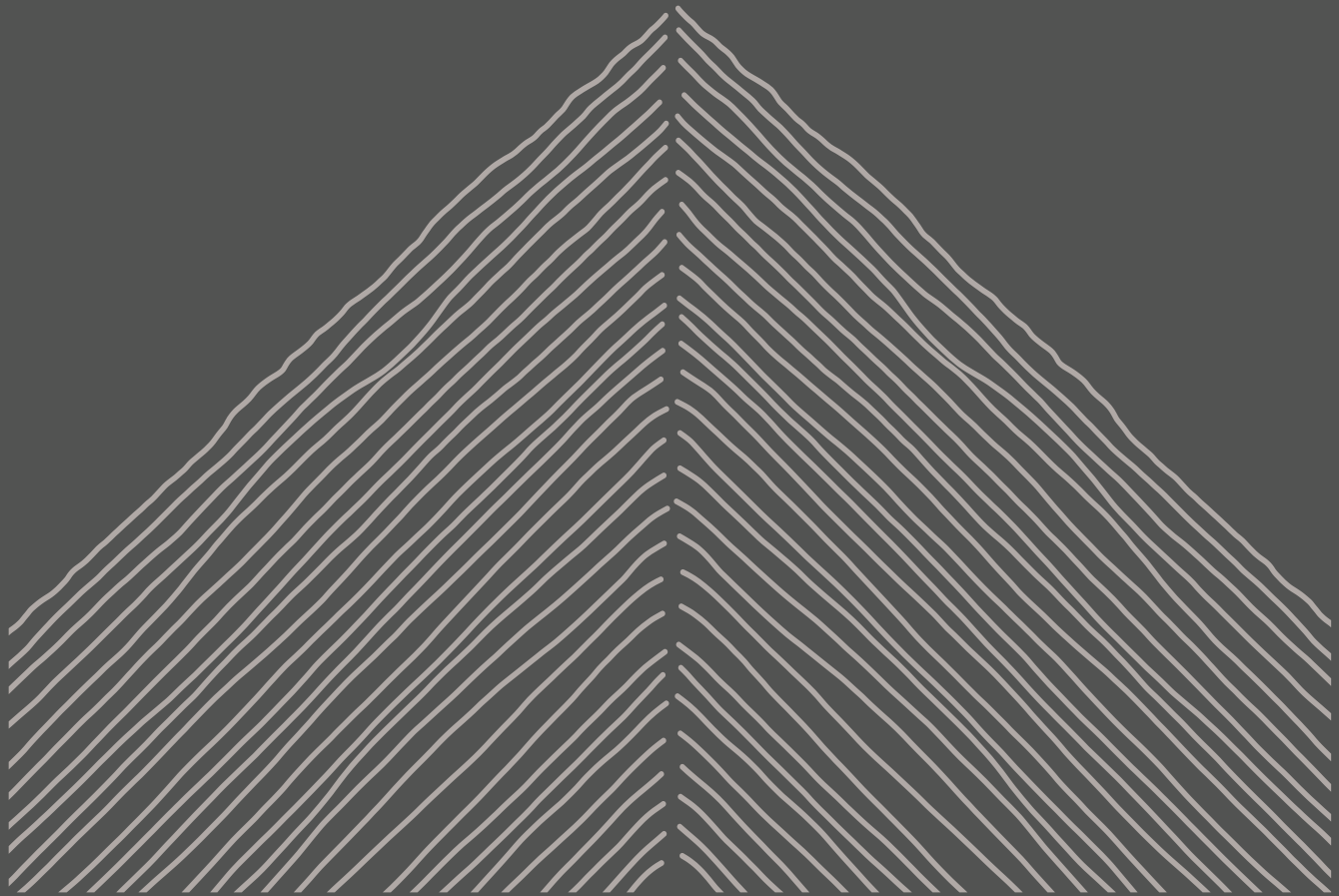


2020

REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY:  
*Creating a Colorado for All*



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Higher Education

Colorado Equity Champions Coalition



**COLORADO**

**Department of  
Higher Education**

## Colorado Equity Champions Coalition

**This report was prepared by the  
Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and  
Colorado Equity Champions Coalition (ECC)**

December 2020

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The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and Colorado Equity Champions Coalition (ECC) are pleased to present this first educational equity report for higher education. The work presented within this report supports Colorado's goal to reach 66% educational attainment by 2025 through the implementation of strategies aimed at erasing equity gaps.

The report considers the past, asking: What successes have we seen in Colorado, and what policies and practices are promoting that success? We attempt to better understand the issues our students face and the historic issues that have created our current educational equity gaps.

The report outlines recommendations for a brighter future by building on our accomplishments and redirecting efforts to make the necessary change to better support students. The recommendations of the ECC help to identify elements and actions to create an equitable education system.

Lastly, the report provides practical improvement strategies that serve as a guide to ongoing activities of the ECC and establishes measures of success and accountability structures to promote enrollment, persistence, and completion against equity gaps.

Leadership continues to be an essential pillar of Colorado's equity work. Campus presidents, department staff, and commissioners provide insights and enthusiasm, and must continue to stress the importance of equity within our work. We must keep a focus on equity and set an example for leaders to follow.

Next spring, ECC and CDHE will host the first annual Day of Dialogue where leaders will be asked to sign on and commit to working alongside us in our efforts to create a more equitable Colorado, [A Colorado for All](#). We hope you will join us.

In partnership,



Dr. Angie Paccione



Dr. Ryan Ross (*ECC Co-Chair*)



David Olguin (*ECC Co-Chair*)



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# REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL EQUITY: *Creating a Colorado for All*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



*The U.S. was built as a land of opportunity for all. While this may hold true for some, these opportunities are not equally available to all. The nature of the nation's forming has had long-lasting negative impacts on Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This continues to hold true for our education systems.*

### COLLEGE-GOING

- Gaps greater than 30% exist by race/ethnicity
- Gaps between 6% and 11% exist by gender
- Gaps between 14% to 23% exist by socioeconomic status

### COLLEGE COMPLETION

- Black or African American and American Indian or Alaska Native complete at the lowest rates compared to White and Asian students
- Females complete at higher rates than males

### WORKFORCE EARNINGS

- Males earn more than females with the same credentials, up to \$24,000 more when comparing the same bachelor's degree in STEM fields
- Racial disparities exists when looking within the same gender. Gaps of up to \$7,000 when looking between Hispanic or Latinx females and Black or African American females with a health certificate
- The largest gap between males with the same degree lies within those with a certificate in trades, with a gap of nearly \$9,000

2

*Recommendations*

COMMUNICATION

Communicate the value of a public higher education system that is equitable and accessible to all identities, abilities, and races.

EQUITY-MINDED PRACTICES

Implement equity practices throughout campuses using tools to understand areas of improvement. Create intentional, safe, and inclusive spaces, and adapt curriculum to better reflect and inform the voices of all students.

POLICY

Analyze existing policies and develop new policies that support equitable and inclusive practices.

3

*Action*

The action plan provides practical improvement strategies to ongoing activities to promote enrollment, persistence, completion against equity gaps. The ECC, State and Legislature are tasked and committed to a set of recommended actions.



# 1

## *Needs Assessment and Data*

# Introduction

In 2017, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) published [\*Colorado Rises: Advancing Education and Talent Development\*](#), a call to action for Colorado—to our institutions of higher education, the Governor, the General Assembly, and other state policy leaders, business and community leaders. *Colorado Rises* elevates four goals: Increase credential completion, erase equity gaps, improve student success, and invest in affordability and innovation. Alongside *Colorado Rises*, CDHE received support from Lumina Foundation’s Talent, Innovation and, Equity (TIE) grant, to accelerate momentum toward equity goals. The grant established an equity toolkit for faculty and administrators; funded three campus-level equity-focused interventions; and created the first cohort of professionals and students engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion named the Equity Coalition Champions (ECC), to convene and advocate for change at a policy level.

We’ve found through our campus interventions, that **campus leaders are role models**, driven to support every student, and in creating welcoming and inclusive learning environments where all students have a sense of belonging and see their path to degree completion and the workforce. Conversely, **lack of funding is a detriment to advancing equity**. In some cases, campuses have been able to center equity in their values and agenda, and make measurable progress on retention and completion programs with limited resources. Others are clear, as documented by research and literature on this topic, that progress in closing equity gaps has been difficult to achieve, as a result.

Institution staff charged with leading equity initiatives often feel isolated in their commitment and find themselves at risk when speaking up about what is needed to support change. As a state, we can facilitate, convene, and utilize our voice to address these challenges. When incentives, data, and collective accountability do not produce our desired results and participation, other levers of change must be implemented. Laws and policies can be used to demand necessary and needed support to fight inequities and institutional racism.

A global pandemic is disproportionately impacting people of color through economic, social, health, and mental health. Alongside this, we have seen months of civic unrest, with demands for social systemic change, including anti-racist policies.



In August 2020, Governor Jared Polis issued an [executive order](#) requiring state agencies to engage in equity, diversity, and inclusion training, develop strategic plans, and examine hiring and retention practices to promote a more equitable state government. Earlier in the summer, CDHE took action to establish the Office of Educational Equity (OEE) and create the second cohort of Equity Champions Coalition (ECC). The OEE and ECC identify policies and structures that support students, erase equity gaps, examine those producing or sustaining inequitable policies, and determine an action plan for change.

The Equity Champions Coalition, with the support of CDHE, writes this report as a first step in developing a strategic plan to drive improvements in success and completion for students of color in Colorado. The publication maps out:

- A vision identifying an equitable education system
- Principles of an exemplary education system to help Colorado achieve that vision
- Practical improvement strategies that align to these principles as a guide to ongoing activities over the time period of the Coalition
- Measures of success and accountability structures to promote enrollment, persistence, completion against equity gaps



Collective voice and work can help showcase the state's opportunity and inspire colleges to create a shared vision and share best practices. The intention of our second cohort of Equity Champions Coalition is to test this theory of action.

# A Look Back: State of (In)equity in Colorado

The U.S. has been said to be a land of opportunity for all. While this may hold true for some, the truth is, opportunities are not as equally available to everyone. The building of the nation has long-lasting negative impacts on Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This continues to hold true for our education systems.

To set a path forward to improvement, it is important to understand where we are, according to data. Reporting and analyzing data related to students in postsecondary institutions throughout Colorado is a main function of CDHE. Every year, the department releases several reports, researching trends and statistics to influence needed policy change. While it is not the main goal, each report does address equity, mostly highlighting known equity gaps.

While CDHE's reports ordinarily focus on the gap between a group's performance and the goal for the state, or the state average, but in this report, we feel that it is important to look at groups individually and specifically examine gaps between groups, including relative rank order. The following section pulls information from those reports to see where equity gaps exist and where they are improving, and are used to inform forthcoming recommendations and action plan. The analysis uses U.S. Census data and data from the following CDHE publications: [Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado's High School Graduates Report](#), [Graduation Rates Report](#), [Retention Rates Report](#), [Return on Investment Report](#), [Talent Pipeline Report](#). There are many limitations to existing data and analysis. It is clear that expanding and improving data sources to allow a complete picture that reflects all students and their families is essential and necessary, especially for Native Americans and Alaska Natives whose lack of data leave them invisible\*. We should seek to acknowledge populations and identities that have been, and continue to be, present in our nation but are often left out. Please reference the *Recommendations* section for initial steps to improve and the *Language and Definitions* section for further discussion and reflection.

\*According to the National Congress of American Indians, "This invisibility is perpetuated by federal and state agencies and policies that leave American Indians and Alaska Natives out of data collection efforts, data reporting and analysis, and/or public media campaigns" (<https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/data>)

## Pre-Collegiate Progress and Outcomes

Preparing for postsecondary education begins as soon as any education begins, but high school is where the opportunities really start to present themselves. High school students have multiple programs to prepare for help for postsecondary education, complete postsecondary credits, and even earn postsecondary credentials. Historically, the majority of postsecondary students enroll directly from high school, without taking time between secondary and postsecondary. This section of the data considers equity within **Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado's High School Graduates**.

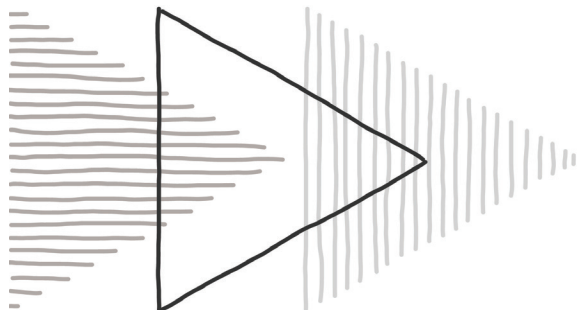
**TABLE 1: CTE Participation by Race/Ethnicity Over Time**

	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change
American Indian or Alaska Native	72.40%	72.81%	66.16%	-8.61%
Asian	67.88%	69.72%	72.31%	6.53%
Black or African American	64.17%	63.85%	66.45%	3.55%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	62.86%	71.01%	68.75%	9.38%
Hispanic or Latinx	68.28%	68.64%	69.17%	1.30%
Two or More Races	71.36%	72.72%	72.92%	2.19%
White	73.64%	74.48%	74.28%	.87%

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

First, CDHE maintains career and technical education (CTE) and dual enrollment data, which allows for the examination of gaps and changes over time. Data demonstrate that participation in CTE programs is increasing for all races/ethnicities except American Indian or Alaska Native (Table 1). While the overall changes amongst students of the same race/ethnicity have not shifted much, the most significant change is a 10% increase for Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, although gaps remain. In 2016, the range in CTE participation was between 62.9% for Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders and 73.6% for Whites, approximately a gap of 11%. In 2017 the gap is also 11% and in 2018 the gap is 8%.

The gap in CTE participation is slightly narrowing, but the participation rate of White students is always highest, while the lowest participation continues to belong to Black or African American students. Participation disparities are also seen when looking at gender and socio-economic status, but not as dramatically as gaps by race/ethnicity. A gap persists between both gender and students who qualify for free/reduced lunch and those who do not, at 5%. A movement toward equal participation rates amongst all races/ethnicities will help ensure all students have an equal opportunity to explore different postsecondary credential options.



## A MOVEMENT TOWARD EQUAL PARTICIPATION RATES

amongst all races/ethnicities will help ensure all students have an equal opportunity to explore different postsecondary credential options.

Dual enrollment allows high school students to take college-level courses and receive both high school and college credit. This program allows students to save on the cost of postsecondary education with a reduced number of credits needed to graduate. Table 2, looks at dual enrollment characteristics over time by race/ethnicity. Again, gains for all races/ethnicities are increasing, although Hawaiian or Pacific Islander participation shows minimal change with an increase of only 6.8%. The gap starts at about 10% between White students at 26.6% and American Indian or Alaska Native students at 15.9%. While the specific race/ethnicity holding the top and bottom spots does change, the gap between the highest participation rate and the lowest participation rate remains at around 10%. Taking gender and socio-economic status into consideration, we see gaps again. Females participate at a higher rate than males, but this gap is narrowing over time and remains at or under 5%. Socio-economic status results

**DUAL ENROLLMENT**  
can be a key lever for students with lower incomes by providing an introduction to postsecondary education.

in a similar gap to gender, although the latest result of 53.3% vs 37.7% is a massive gap that is not moving in the right direction. Dual enrollment can be a key lever for students with lower incomes by providing an introduction to postsecondary education. There is room for improvement in the participation rates amongst free and reduced lunch students and students of different race/ethnicities.

**TABLE 2:** Dual Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	15.88%	22.64%	27.60%	27.66%	31.89%	100.84%
<b>Asian</b>	26.46%	30.14%	36.81%	42.14%	43.65%	64.95%
<b>Black or African American</b>	20.57%	31.08%	28.64%	34.00%	36.16%	75.81%
<b>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>	26.67%	23.26%	26.43%	23.67%	28.47%	6.77%
<b>Hispanic or Latinx</b>	24.81%	29.29%	30.66%	32.32%	34.70%	39.84%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	25.22%	28.94%	33.04%	32.66%	37.38%	48.18%
<b>White</b>	26.64%	32.24%	34.83%	37.68%	40.12%	50.61%

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education



Moving along the educational pathway, CDHE reports allow the examination of equity specifically looking at disaggregated college-going rates and enrollment information. Tables 3 and 4 examine gaps that have changed over time. Breaking the college-going rate down by race and ethnicity shows that besides White and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, all races/ethnicities are increasing their college-going rate. The gaps here are not improving, with more than a 30% gap between American Indian or Alaska Native students and Asian students in 2014, and still more than a 30% gap in 2018. Table 3 shows that the gaps between females and males have not changed much over time but varied between 6.3% and 11.1%. When looking at socioeconomic status, the gap changes slightly more over time, from 14.4% to 23.3%, but remains wide. If we are not able to close gaps in college-going rates, gaps will continue to persist in completion. The next section analyzes equity gaps as a student continues to postsecondary education

**TABLE 3:** College-going Rates by Gender and Income

High School Graduation Year	Female	Male	No FRL	FRL
2018	61.8%	51.4%	62.1%	42.7%
2017	61.9%	50.8%	62.0%	43.4%
2016	60.3%	51.2%	61.6%	42.0%
2015	61.2%	51.8%	62.2%	41.5%
2014	60.4%	51.4%	60.9%	39.8%
2013	59.9%	50.7%	60.7%	40.5%
2012	61.1%	52.8%	62.7%	41.4%
2011	61.0%	53.7%	62.5%	41.5%
2010	61.9%	53.8%	60.3%	45.9%
2009	62.0%	55.7%	66.0%	42.7%

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

**TABLE 4:** College-Going Rate by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percent Change
American Indian or Alaska Native	40.52%	41.04%	41.93%	38.06%	43.82%	8.14%
Asian	72.71%	72.66%	75.00%	75.23%	79.00%	8.66%
Black or African American	51.44%	53.88%	53.01%	54.84%	55.08%	7.09%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	48.89%	41.09%	49.29%	43.20%	47.92%	-1.99%
Hispanic or Latinx	42.28%	43.64%	44.22%	45.79%	45.85%	8.44%
Two or More Races	58.88%	58.87%	58.53%	58.22%	59.14%	0.46%
White	61.61%	61.93%	60.72%	61.15%	61.42%	-0.32%

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

# Postsecondary Progress and Outcomes

For students who decide to go to an institution of higher education, this section reviews first-year indicators of success, retention rates, graduation rates, credential attainment rates, and Census attainment data. This information is pulled from The Postsecondary Access and Success for Colorado’s High School Graduates Report, the Graduation Rates Report, the Retention Rates Report, and the Talent Pipeline Report.

First-year indicators of success are very telling of how students will perform at their institution. For those enrolling in Colorado in 2018, Table 5 shows average GPA, average credits, and percentages within ranges of credits. The gap in average GPA between genders is relatively close, with females earning 0.2 GPA points

higher, a 7% difference. The gap in socio-economic status is higher at 0.33 GPA points, a 12% difference. The highest gap in average GPA for race/ethnicity, between White students and Black or African American students, is 0.58 GPA points, a 21% difference. Examining the average credits shows close numbers for gender. Socio-economic status shows a wide gap of over 6 credits, a 21% difference. The highest gap again is demonstrated when examining race and ethnicity, with a gap of more than 10 credits between Asian and Black or African American students, a 35% difference. With an average of 24.9 credits, Black or African American students, on average, will only have 100 credits after four years. This will result in an extra year of school; higher cost and more time, a deterrent that keeps students from completing.

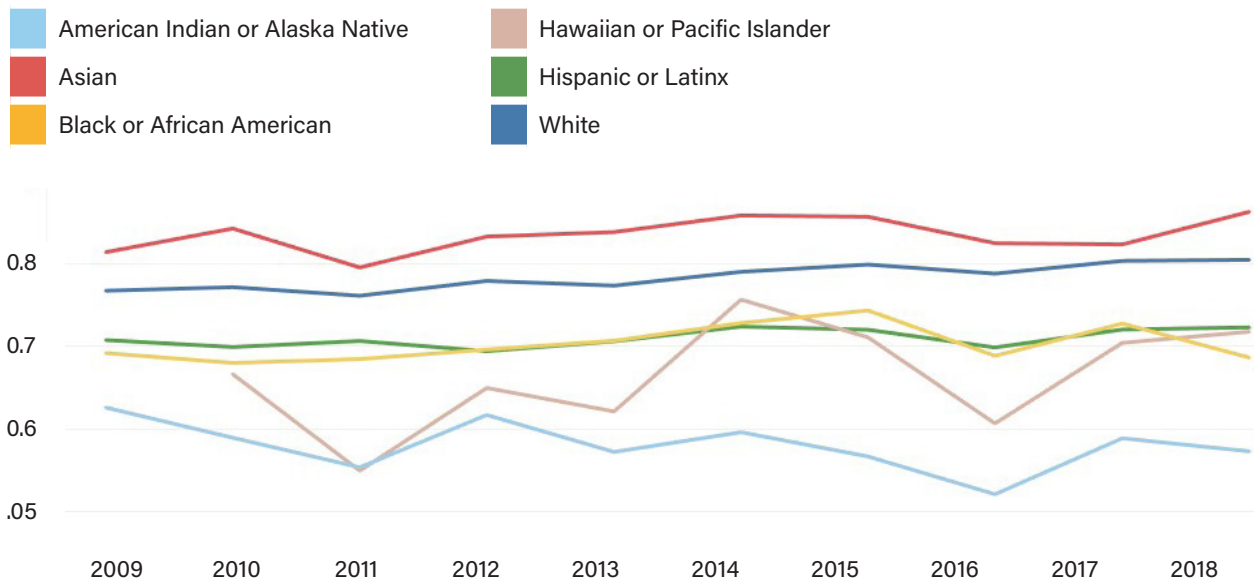
**TABLE 5:** First-Year Leading Indicators of Success by Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Income for 2018 College Enrollees

	Average GPA	Average Credits	% with 15 Credits or More	% with 24 Credits or More	% with 30 Credits or More
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	2.93	32.85	82.94%	67.95%	51.18%
Male	2.72	31.38	80.16%	65.28%	47.13%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.48	27.12	73.48%	56.06%	37.12%
Asian	2.95	35.75	87.56%	74.44%	57.63%
Black or African American	2.38	24.90	66.90%	44.97%	31.07%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2.44	28.47	71.05%	52.63%	31.58%
Hispanic or Latinx	2.62	28.46	73.97%	55.31%	38.74%
Two or More Races	2.77	31.84	80.73%	67.97%	48.44%
White	2.96	34.19	86.09%	73.19%	55.22%
<b>Socio-economic Status</b>					
No FRL	2.90	33.68	84.90%	71.27%	53.51%
FRL	2.57	27.03	71.02%	51.78%	35.53%

Sources: CDE, SURDS, Colorado Department of Higher Education

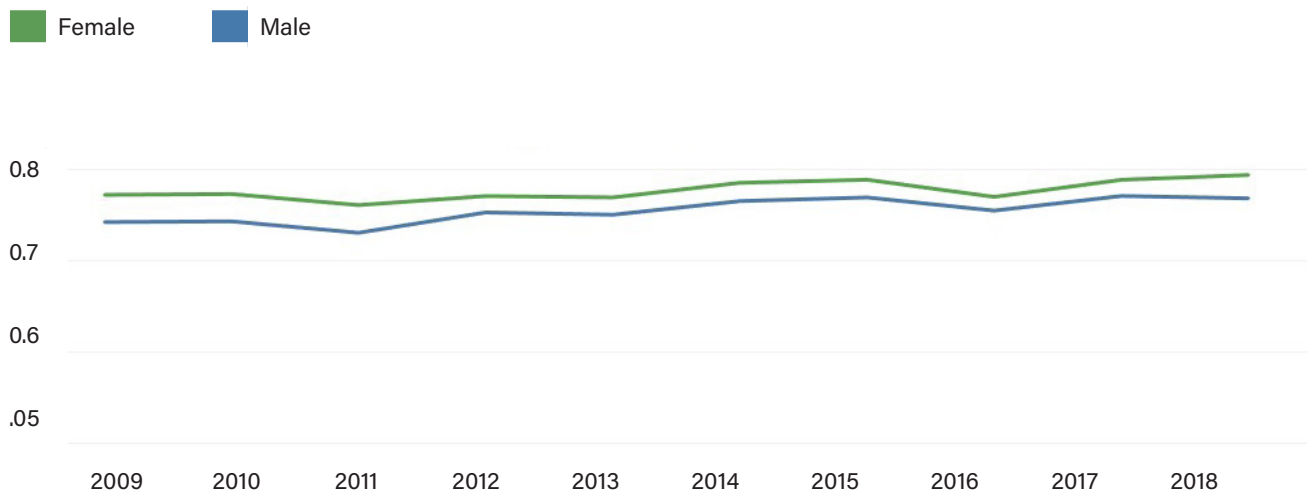
Retention rates help identify who is enrolling and then continuing with their education. Retention rates are calculated based on fall college enrollees still enrolled the following fall. Students are much more likely to complete a program with continuous enrollment as opposed to taking a break and returning. Figure 1 shows some change over time in the lower bracket, but White and Asian students remain at the highest retention percentages. Figure 2 demonstrates that over time the gap between female and male retention rates has barely changed. Although both remain on an upward trajectory, females consistently maintain higher retention rates. As gaps in retention rates continue, the next set of data examine gaps in completion.

**FIGURE 1: Retention Rates by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Census attainment data

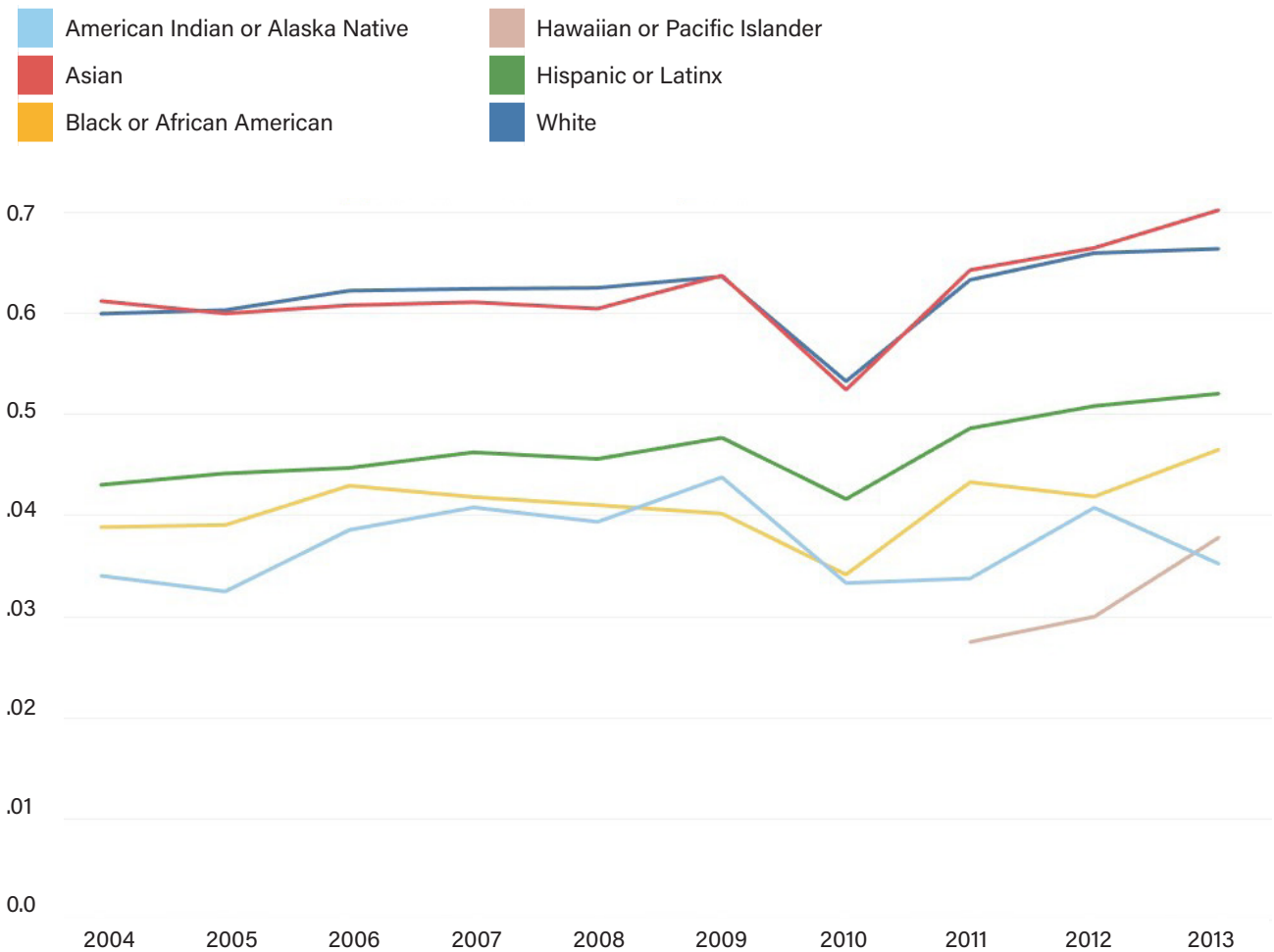
**FIGURE 2: Retention Rates by Gender**



Source: Census attainment data

Completion or graduation is the goal when entering postsecondary education. Graduation rates are calculated based on the number of postsecondary enrollees, and those that graduate from their program. This is a measure of students who either persisted, were still enrolled a year after they first enrolled, or students who graduated with a credential. The differences here are almost the same as the persistence/retention rates. Figure 3 shows similar trends to the retention rates over time. While the race/ethnicity that takes the highest ranking for graduation rate changes between White and Asian students, no other race/ethnicity takes the top spot. The lowest completing race/ethnicity switches between Black or African American and American Indian or Alaska Native. The gaps over time are not decreasing. Gaps are also seen and maintained over time when looking at gender. Female students lead in completion rates, but the gender gap is much closer than race/ethnicity gaps.

**FIGURE 3:** Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity

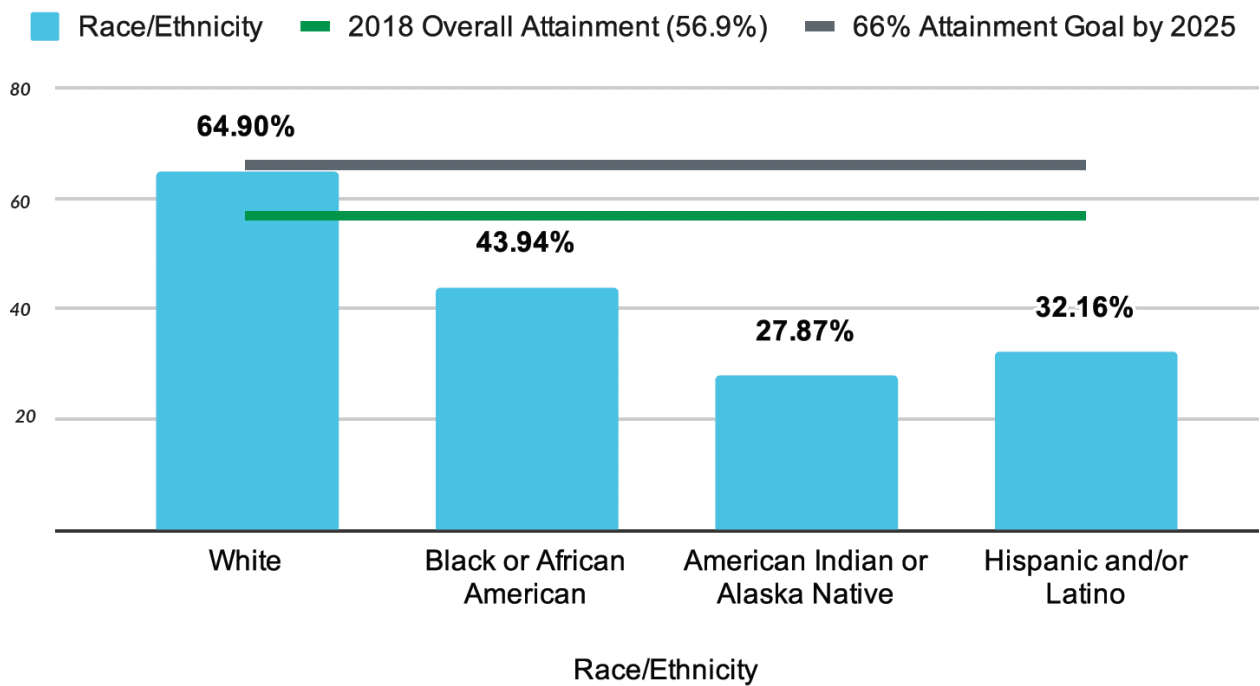


Source: Census attainment data



The next measure of success is credential attainment, the starting point for a well-paying career. Figure 4 gives us a view of the Colorado workforce as of 2018, with the overall state higher education attainment rate of 56.9%, and attainment broken down by race/ethnicity. The attainment rate of the White population is 64.9%, with American Indian or Alaska Native population at 27.9%, a gap of more than 37%. White attainment is above the overall rate, while all other populations fall far below the overall rate. The smallest gap is still nearly 21%.

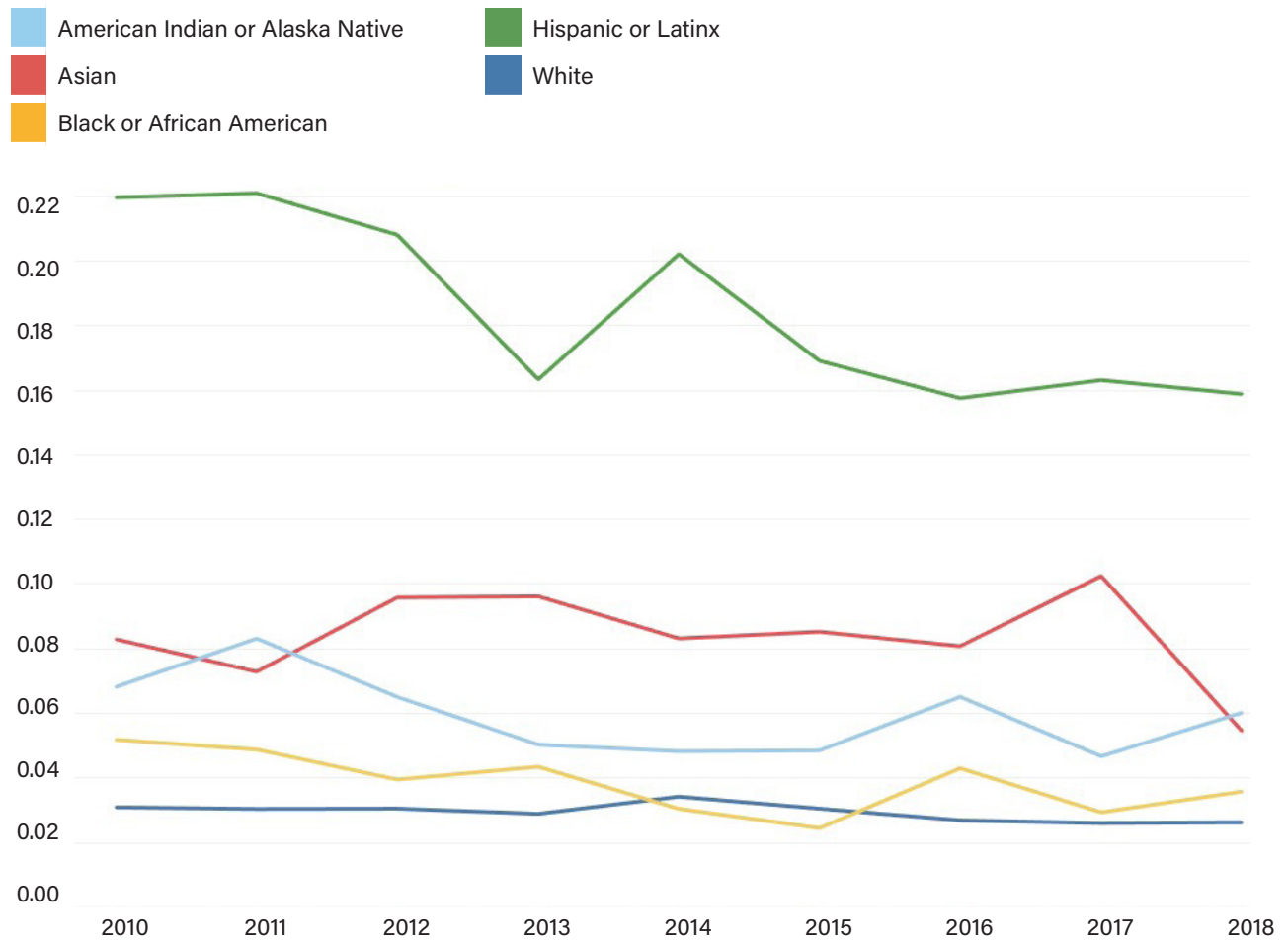
**FIGURE 4:** Colorado’s 2018 Postsecondary Credential Attainment



Source: 2019 Talent Pipeline Report

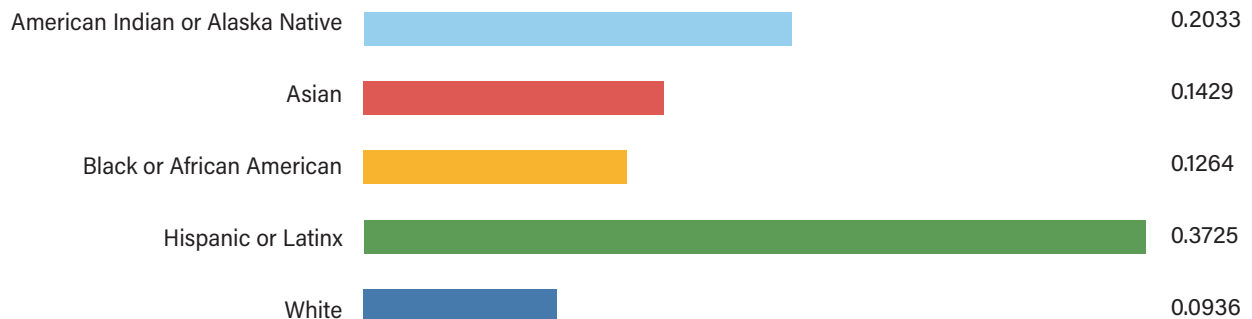
Colorado Census data provides the best look at attainment rates over time and shows growth over time in attaining a high school diploma or equivalent. Figures 5 and 6 show the percentage of each population that has achieved a high school diploma or equivalent. We see large gaps over time that have not changed except for the Hispanic or Latinx population.

**FIGURE 5: Less Than HS by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Census attainment data

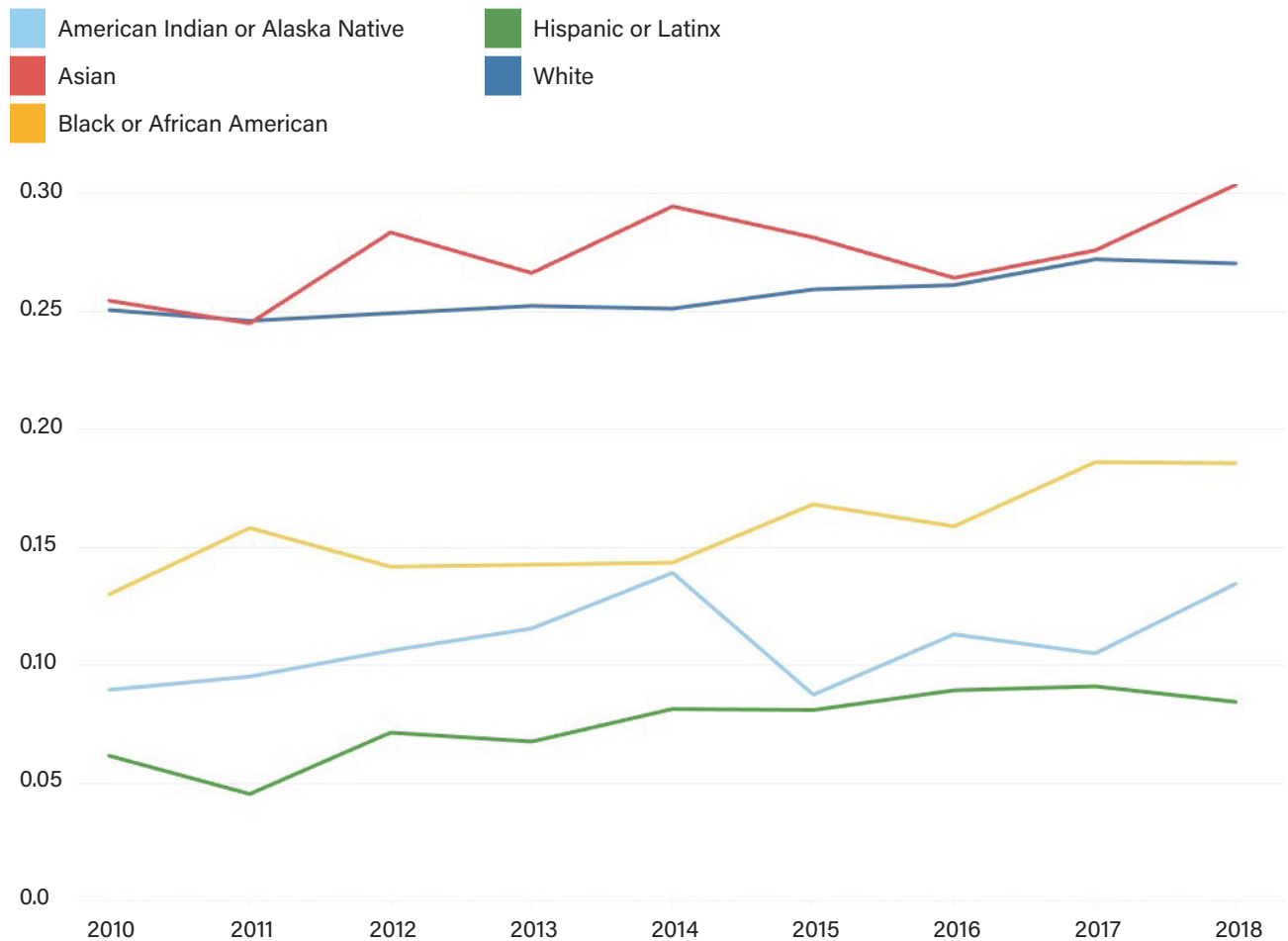
**FIGURE 6: Less Than HS by Race/Ethnicity 2005-2009**



Source: Census attainment data

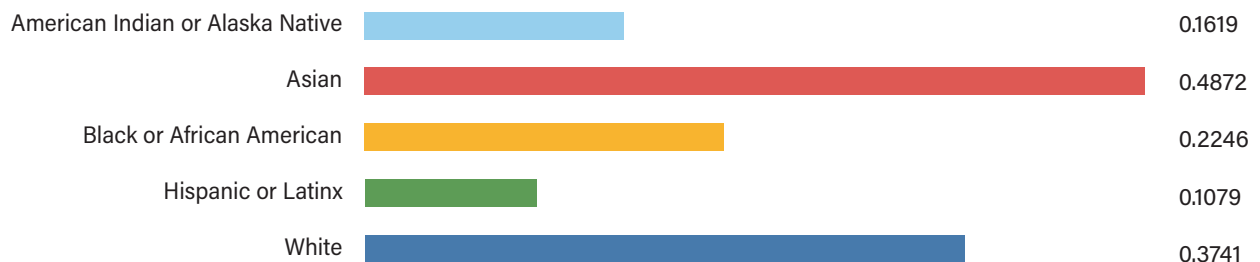
While White students maintain the lowest percentage of a population without at least a high school diploma, a decrease in this percentage for Hispanic or Latinx students is seen over time, showing positive progress. More data demonstrate the completion of at least a bachelor's degree. Figures 7 and 8 demonstrates Asian and White populations switch between the first and second-highest ranked bachelor's degree attainment rate, with an overall upward path. For the race/ethnicities showing lower completion percentages, the Hispanic or Latinx population maintains the lowest bachelor's attainment rate, followed by American Indian or Alaska Native then Black or African American.

**FIGURE 7: Bachelor's Degree by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Census attainment data

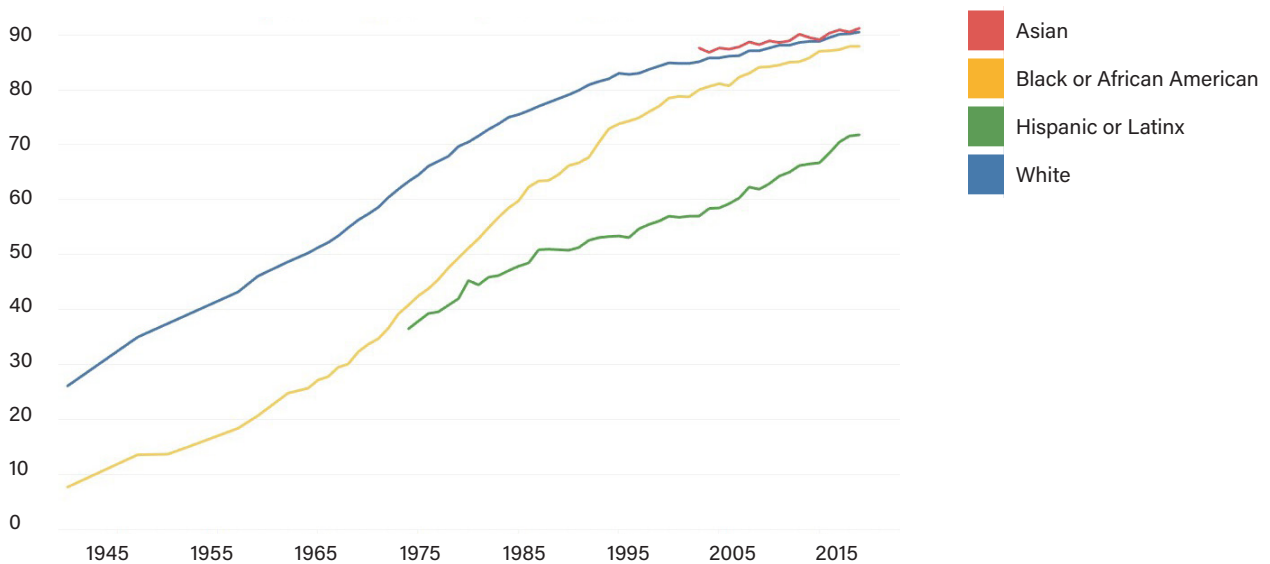
**FIGURE 8: Bachelor's Degree by Race/Ethnicity 2005-2009**



Source: Census attainment data

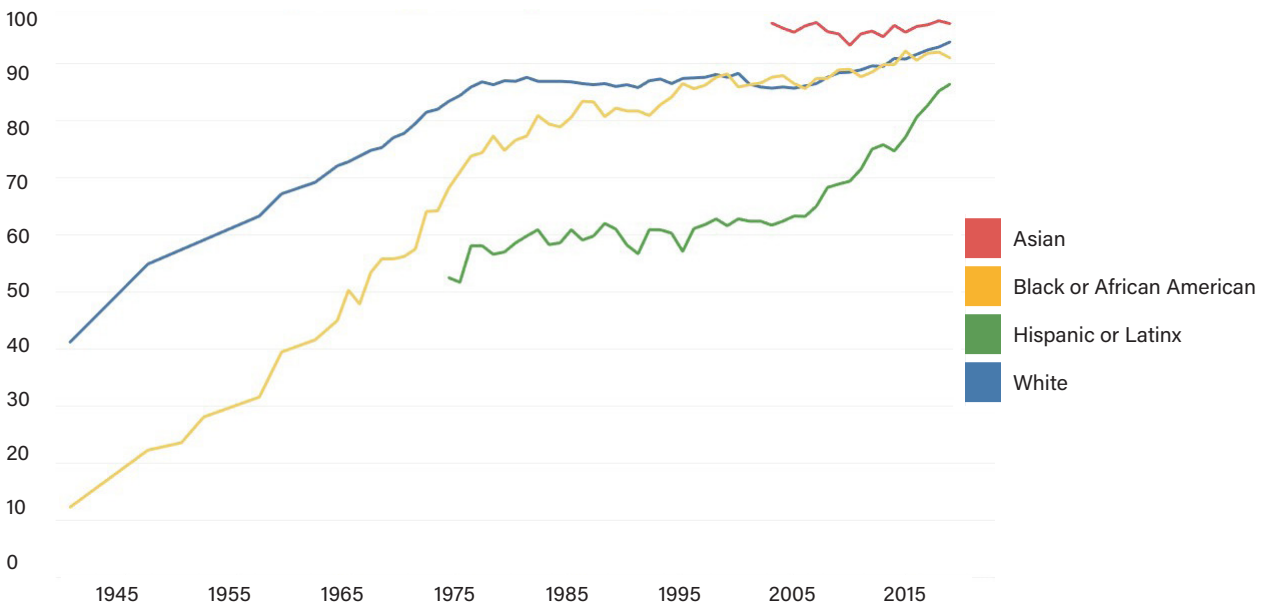
The paths for the lower ranking race/ethnicities are not consistently improving, but do show less consistency than that of the Asian and White populations. U.S. Census data provides overall high school completion over time for the U.S. population. Figures 9 and 10 show the rate of attaining at least a high school diploma/equivalency. Of those age 25 or older, all race/ethnicities are increasing their overall high school completion rate. Gaps do exist and remain consistent over time. While most race/ethnicities are approaching a 90% high school completion rate, the Hispanic or Latinx population is only at 70%. While the first chart looks at the entire population over 25-years-old, the next chart focuses on 25- and 29-year-olds; these data provide a more promising outlook, demonstrating that younger Hispanic or Latinx students, relatively recently, are completing high school at a much higher rate.

**FIGURE 9: 4 Year High School Completion 25+ by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Census attainment data

**FIGURE 10: 4 Year High School Completion 25-29 by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Census attainment data

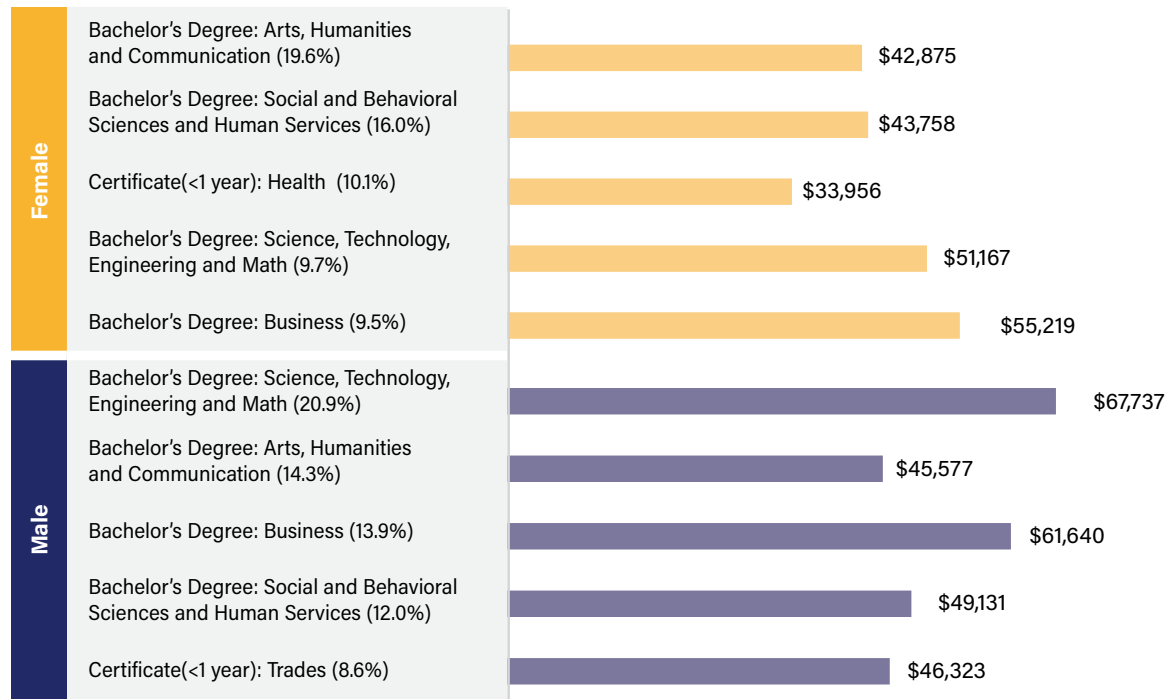
# Real World Progress and Outcomes

High school and postsecondary outcomes present equity gaps, and those trends continue into wage outcomes, population projections, unemployment rates, and U.S. Census wage data. The next section looks at the following reports from the department: Return on Investment report and the Talent Pipeline report.

The Return on Investment report highlights median wages for students who completed a degree between 2004 and 2009. First, we'll look at how median wages differ between genders, then how race/ethnicity factors in. Figure 11 demonstrates significant gaps between female and male workers. Males earn more than females with the same credentials. The highest

gap between genders is for a bachelor's degree in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), where males earn nearly \$24,000 more than females. The closest gap is \$1,800 with a bachelor's degree in arts, humanities, and communication. These gaps should not exist. As Table 6 demonstrates, these gaps also exist amongst females of different race/ethnicities. The largest gap is almost \$7,000 between a Hispanic or Latinx female and a Black or African American female with a health certificate. Table 7 demonstrates that gaps exist and are at times larger than the gaps within females of differing race/ethnicities. The largest gap between males with the same degree lies within those with a certificate in trades, with a gap of nearly \$9,000.

**FIGURE 11: 5-Year Median Wage for Top 5 Most Popular Programs by Gender**



Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

**TABLE 6: Top Five Degree Programs Pursued and 5-Year Wages For Female Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

<b>Asian   FEMALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$44,827
Bachelor's	Business	\$55,352
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$55,276
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$47,005
Certificate < 1 yr	Health	\$34,265

<b>Black or African American   FEMALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$42,993
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$43,055
Certificate < 1 yr	Health	\$36,872
Bachelor's	Business	\$50,694
Associate Arts	Humanities and Communication	\$39,573

<b>Hispanic or Latinx   FEMALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$42,984
Certificate < 1 yr	Health	\$29,971
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$43,488
Bachelor's	Business	\$53,096
Associate Arts	Humanities and Communication	\$37,824

<b>White   FEMALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$42,912
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$43,735
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$51,097
Bachelor's	Business	\$55,680
Certificate < 1 yr	Health	\$34,806

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

**TABLE 7: Top Five Degree Programs Pursued and 5-Year Wages For Male Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

<b>Asian   MALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$66,161
Bachelor's	Business	\$58,211
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$46,580
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$51,551
Certificate < 1 yr	Trades	\$49,397

<b>Black or African American   MALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$44,888
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$46,078
Bachelor's	Business	\$53,555
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$60,122
Certificate < 1 yr	Trades	\$40,906

<b>Hispanic or Latinx   MALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Certificate < 1 yr	Trades	\$42,456
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$65,269
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$44,909
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$48,073
Bachelor's	Business	\$58,618

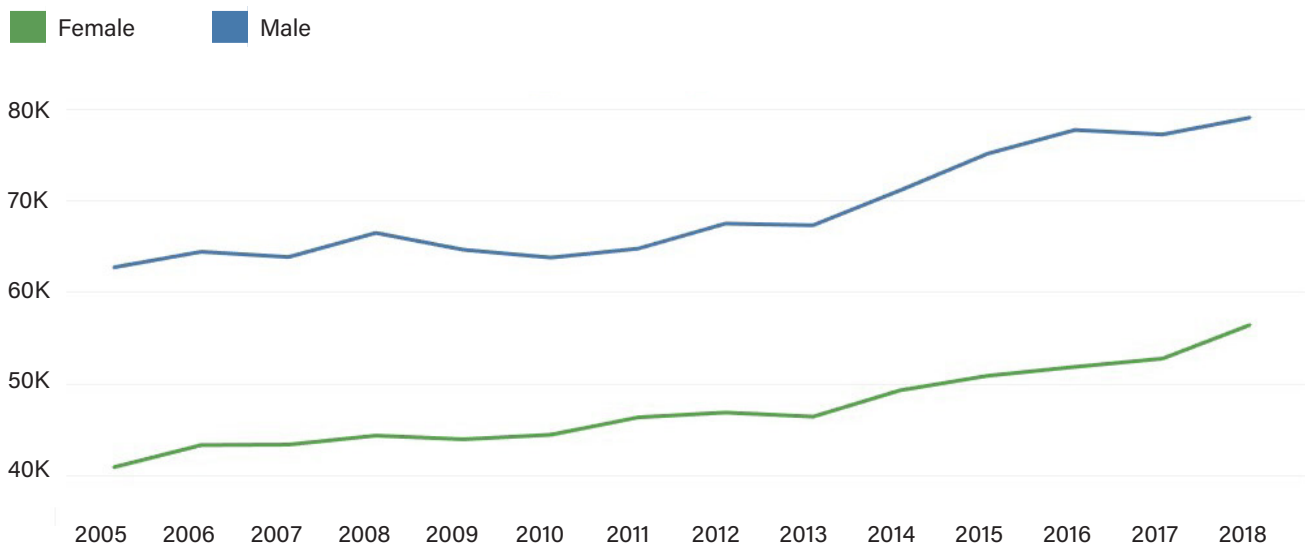
<b>White   MALE</b>		<b>5-Year Wage</b>
<b>Degree</b>		
Bachelor's	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math	\$67,862
Bachelor's Arts	Arts, Humanities and Communication	\$45,775
Bachelor's	Business	\$62,236
Bachelor's	Social and Behavioral Sciences and Human Services	\$49,789
Certificate < 1 yr	Trades	\$48,214

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

U.S. Census data are able to show if wage inequalities are local to Colorado, or if they exist all over the U.S. These data are the median earnings of the population that has a bachelor's degree. Looking at gender, there are substantial gaps every year between the mean earnings of a female versus a male (Figure 12). Males earn more on average, and the gap has not improved. Around 2010, that gap slightly decreased but has since increased. There is nothing to suggest that wages among gender groups will even out. Figure 13 shows there is a large gap between

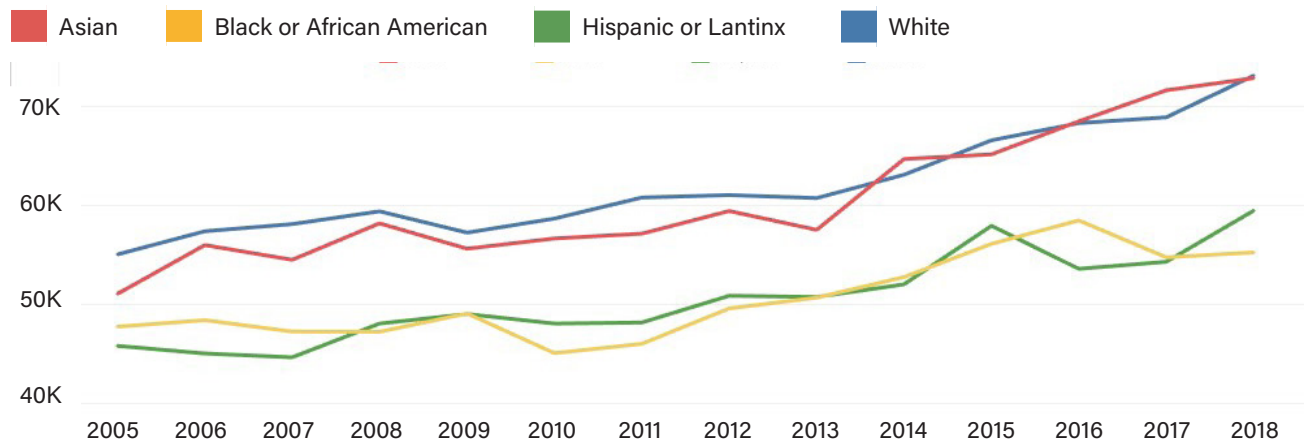
the top two earning race/ethnicities and the bottom two earning race/ethnicities, although the gap is not nearly as high as the gender gap. Again, Asian and White populations hold the highest mean earnings, while Black or African American and Hispanic or Latinx populations hold the lowest mean earnings. The slope lines for each race/ethnicity tells us how the mean earnings change over time. The slope of White and Asian populations is higher than that of Hispanic or Latinx and Black or African American populations.

**FIGURE 12: Mean Earnings with Bachelor's Degree by Gender**



Source: Census attainment data

**FIGURE 13: Mean Earnings for Bachelor's Degree by Race/Ethnicity**



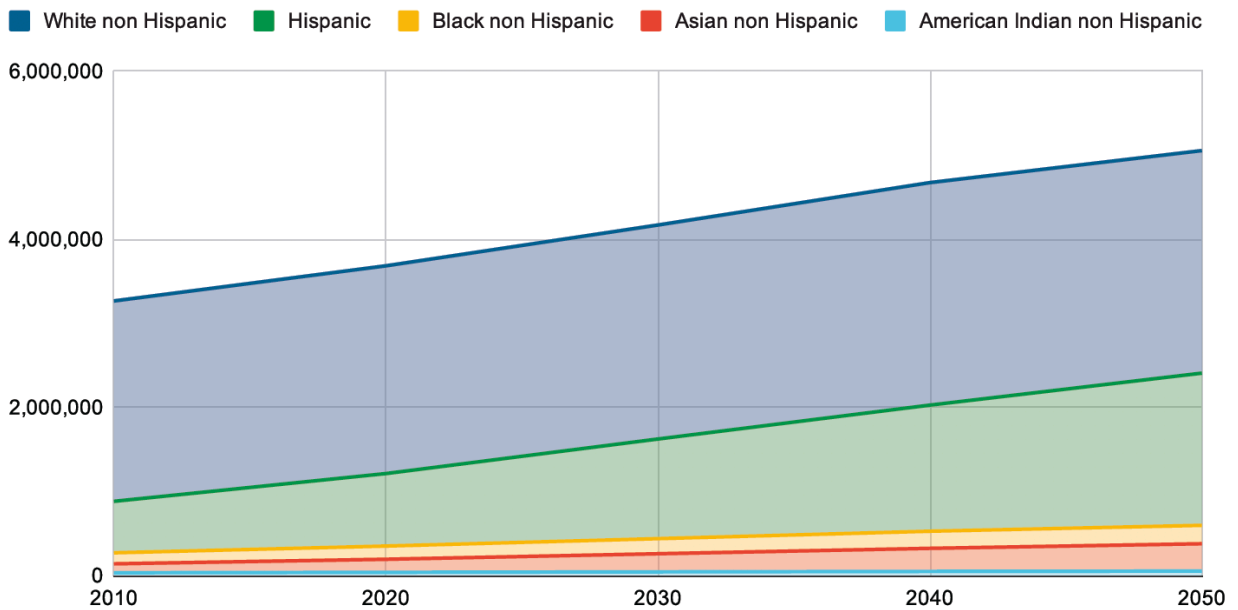
Source: Census attainment data



WITHOUT PROVIDING  
 EQUAL ACCESS TO A  
 POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL,  
*Colorado will not have a prepared or  
 diverse workforce to fill higher-paying jobs.*

To have a strong economy in Colorado, there must be a workforce prepared to take high paying jobs. White and Asian populations obtain a postsecondary credential at the highest rates, while the Hispanic or Latinx population has the lowest rates. The Talent Pipeline report, shows that the population percentages are expected to change significantly over time (Figure 14). The Hispanic or Latinx population in Colorado is expected to increase at nearly the same rate as the White population, which will lead to a higher percentage of Hispanics or Latinx in the workforce. Without providing equal access to a postsecondary credential, Colorado will not have a prepared or diverse workforce to fill higher-paying jobs.

**FIGURE 14:** Colorado Population Projection by Race, Age 16-24: 2010 - 2050



Source: 2019 Talent Pipeline Report

Unemployment rates are another key factor in looking at how the economy is doing. These three charts on unemployment show a massive inequality amongst Black or African American populations. The first table (Table 8), shows that the unemployment rate of Black or African American workers is nearly double that of White workers and Hispanic or Latinx workers, at 6.6%. Table 9 shows the same trend, with the unemployment rate for Black or African American workers is nearly double that of White workers and Hispanic or Latinx workers, at 25.9%. The third table (Table 10), demonstrates that the Hispanic or Latinx population has the closest rates between females and males, with females having a higher unemployment rate. The White population and Black or African American populations both have gaps of more than 1% and males with a higher unemployment rate. Ensuring low unemployment rates for all promotes a thriving economy.



**TABLE 8:** 2018 Colorado Unemployment Rate by Race and Ethnicity\*

Race/Ethnicity	Unemployment Rate
White	3.2%
Black or African American	6.6%
Hispanic	3.4%
All Races	3.3%

\*Unemployment rate by sex and race of civilian non-institutional population ages 16+

**TABLE 9:** 2018 Unemployment Rate for Coloradans 16-19 Years Old by Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Unemployment Rate
White	13.9%
Black or African American	25.9%
Hispanic	12.3%
All Races	14.5%

**TABLE 10:** 2018 Colorado Unemployment Rate by Gender Identity and Race and Ethnicity\*

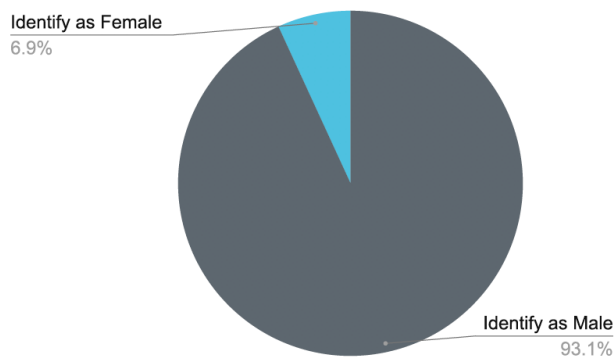
Gender Identity, Race/Ethnicity	Unemployment Rate
Male, White	3.8%
Female, White	2.5%
Male, Black or African American	7.1%
Female, Black or African American	5.9%
Male, Hispanic	3.1%
Female, Hispanic	3.8%

\*Unemployment rate by sex and race of civilian non-institutional population ages 16+

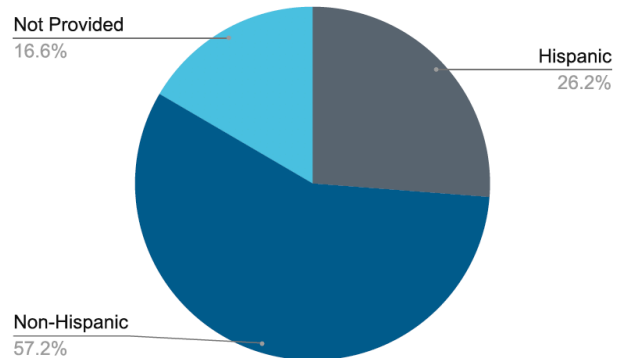
Source: 2019 Talent Pipeline Report

The final set of data is registered apprenticeship participation. Registered apprenticeships are an excellent way to earn a credential for those who do not want to take the traditional postsecondary education route. Figure 15, 16, and 17 show participation in apprenticeship programs. Figure 15 demonstrates that only 6.9% of registered apprentices are female, with 93.1% are male. Figure 16 demonstrates that most apprentices are non-Hispanic or Latinx. The majority of registered apprentices in Colorado are White, non-Hispanic or non-Latinx, males (Figure 17).

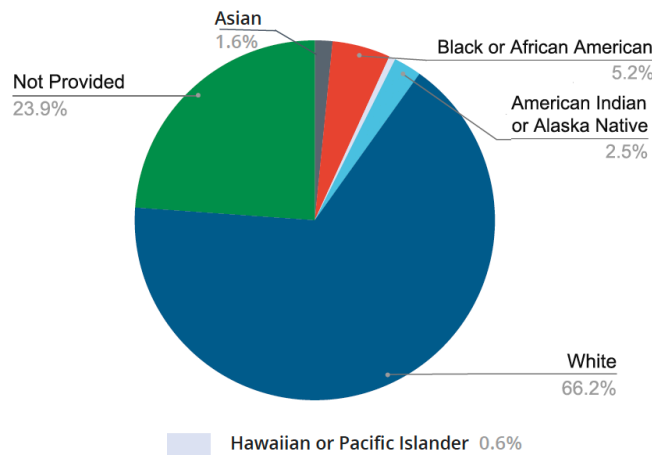
**FIGURE 15:** 2018 USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Participation by Gender Identity



**FIGURE 16:** 2018 USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Participation by Ethnicity



**FIGURE 17:** 2018 USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Participation by Race



Source: 2019 Talent Pipeline Report

## Policy

Colorado's data show proof that more can and must be done to support students equitably. Colorado and department policies, campus initiatives, and policies in other states - such as Oregon, Minnesota, Kentucky, Pennsylvania - or other universities (i.e., Georgia State and Penn State) point to successes and provide analysis focii to see where opportunities for improvement exist.

## State Policies

### **Colorado Executive Order:**

- Requires the Department of Personnel and Administration to guide and direct state agencies in creating long-term strategic plans around inclusivity, anti-discriminatory workplace cultures, and equity in hiring, compensation, and retention.
- Requires that all state employees receive training on equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Mandates that state agencies report their progress on equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Directs the state to review buildings, systems, public meeting procedures, and websites for language and disability accessibility.
- Directs the state to address systemic inequities present in awarding contracts.

**Revising Higher Education Performance Requirements (S.B. 17-297)** requires each governing board to annually set targets aligned with *Colorado Rises*, including credential completion overall and by race/ethnicity and overall retention.

**Financial Aid For Students With In-state Tuition (H.B.19-1196)** expands access to state need-based financial aid for all students, eliminating the current exclusion of DACA students. CDHE developed the Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) so that non-U.S. citizen resident and non-resident students that meet the qualifications, can apply for this aid and other institutional aid. CASFA gives qualified students immediate access to apply for the \$160 million dollars Colorado allocates annually in financial aid.

Over the last several years, higher education has received an unprecedented investment in state dollars to support institutions and keep tuition costs low. In FY 2019-2020, the State invested \$121 million in funding. In the FY 2021-2022 budget request, Gov. Jared Polis and CDHE requested an increase of \$494 million for the General Fund to restore operating support for institutions of higher education to FY 2019-20 levels. The Gov's proposed budget makes critical investments in postsecondary education to support the State's economic recovery and resilience, advance college-access and affordability for students and families, and promote innovation and adaptation to the post-pandemic "new normal." State leaders must continue to build upon these investments.

**College Credit For Work Experience (H.B. 20-1002)** provides returning students, including those displaced by COVID-19, the ability to bring prior work experience to their institution of choice and receive college credit that is transferable statewide. This important strategy lowers cost and time to completion for students.

In 2020, CDHE facilitated a revision process for Colorado's outcomes-based funding formula to give due consideration to incentive structural support for students of color, including the addition of race/ethnicity as a metric. The new funding formula's primary focus ties state funding amounts to an institutions' amount of Pell, minority, and first-generation students; institutions that serve and graduate more of these students will be able to obtain larger increases in state funding. The Department's FY21-22 operating budget request for institutions will be the first time the formula is used. The request would allocate all state funding through the performance step of the model.

**Graduation Guidelines** set a statewide minimum for graduation requirements for local education providers. The policy allows students to demonstrate college readiness in a variety of ways beyond test scores, which can be an inequitable benchmark and bias against students with different learning styles and resources.

## Department and Commission Policies

The Equity Toolkit was created in the fall of 2019 to equip instructors and faculty with tools to erase equity gaps. The toolkit focuses on introductory, beginner level strategies, and techniques to help individual educators develop and refine their knowledge and skills to become more inclusive practitioners. The site is specially designed for individuals who have limited or no access to professional development related to inclusive teaching.

<http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit/>

In 2019, CDHE expanded the *Colorado Rises* Master Plan dashboard to include an interactive addition that shows data by the institutional governing board and the individual institution of higher education. The interactive dashboard allows users to compare annual credential completion numbers with target numbers outlined by each governing board as part of the goal-setting exercise the Department performs with each governing board.

<http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/dashboard/>

Gov. Polis launched the first Z Degree challenge to zero-out textbook costs on Colorado campuses. CDHE launched a training course, ZTC + Equity + Pathways for Colorado, to support faculty and staff. Zero textbook cost initiatives and OER implementation are an excellent strategy for addressing equity in higher education by increasing access and affordability. As the open educational resources movement continues to grow, many data around the country suggest that such practices save students money and improve their educational outcomes. Studies demonstrate an increase in course grade and decreased withdrawal rates when professors adopt open education in the classroom.

<http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/governor-polis-ztc-challenge/>

In the spring and summer of 2020, CDHE conducted a needs assessment based on focus group conversations, student feedback, research, and equity principles established by the ECC. The initial informed this report as more formal recommendations, so they may be operationalized by higher education institutions. How recommendations are implemented on campuses across Colorado vary, depending on funding, student populations, the existence or lack thereof of programs already addressing a stated need, etc.


After analysis, other states have found that opportunity exists to improve and change policies that are inadvertently hindering progress toward an equity agenda. CCHE has not previously audited policies for equity impact.

## Data collaboration policies and improvements

Telling a comprehensive story of student experiences necessitates the sharing of data on these experiences in well-governed, responsible ways. The state has developed multiple ways to support the sharing of data between state agencies to support this work.

The Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) is a state collaborative located at the Office of Information Technology that supports timely and cost-efficient research, evaluation, and analytics using integrated data across state agencies. Supported by the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver, LINC is designed to securely share data to a centralized linking hub in state government to produce anonymized datasets for approved end-users. <https://coloradolab.org/linc/>

My Colorado Journey (a collaborative of Colorado state agencies and partner organizations) provides users with a wide array of information related to planning for various education and training programs ranging from public and private institutions of higher education to private occupational schools and programs on Colorado's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). These programs can connect individuals to workforce opportunities and make them more resilient in the face of changing economic conditions. My Colorado Journey is a valuable tool to erase equity gaps (in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, geography, etc.) and help individuals



**RESPONSIBLE  
DATA SHARING**  
*in Colorado is the rule  
rather than the exception.*

plan for their future in more intentional and holistic ways. As part of the state's development of the My Colorado Journey experience, an innovative and robust data trust has been established. This data trust allows state agencies and partners to quickly and easily share data to calculate student success metrics and connect students to resources across the education/training to workforce continuum. <https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/>

These avenues of responsible data sharing, along with other data sharing agreements, allow partners to address various elements of the student experience and better meet a student's needs depending on their circumstances. Partners in these endeavors work to ensure that well-governed, responsible data sharing in Colorado is the rule rather than the exception.





## Campus Policies and Practices

Approximately eight Governing Systems already have an equity action plan in place, according to recent information gathered during the annual goal-setting process initiated by S.B. 17-297. Five are plans separate from a comprehensive strategic plan; three are a strategy embedded into the strategic plan. The remaining six stated that they were in the process of developing.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education does not facilitate campus climate surveys or analyze data from campuses that have done their own. Campus climate surveys help us understand perceptions of safety and sense of belonging held by students, feelings of safety for staff to engage and promote anti-racist work. In Colorado, Aims Community College, Community College of Aurora, and the University of Northern Colorado are examples of institutions that have developed their own framework for analyzing campus climate and are taking steps toward improvement.



## Social Determinants

Students in postsecondary education face various challenges as they work to complete their credentials. Institutions of higher education have traditionally focused on the “academic needs” of students. However, students are increasingly challenged in their goal of completing credentials by factors including (but certainly not limited to) food insecurity, housing insecurity/homelessness, and mental health needs. A survey of Denver metro area institutions of higher education by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice ([https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/RC2018\\_Denver\\_Report\\_20190906.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/RC2018_Denver_Report_20190906.pdf)) found that:

- 40% experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days
- 55% experienced housing insecurity in the previous year
- 18% experienced homelessness in the previous year

These (and various other) social determinants can significantly impact a student's ability to progress through a postsecondary education program. *Addressing these social determinants can help propel student success by meeting students where they are and better addressing their needs.*



Increasing enrollment and the use of various public benefits is one way to address these social determinants of student success. Students may be eligible for public benefits programs (like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid, etc.) but do not know they are eligible and/or do not know how to enroll. The use of public benefits can act as a “third leg” of financial aid for students and as short-term support towards helping them complete work on their postsecondary credential. By supporting a student’s work towards credential completion, public benefits can be an integral intervention to help them get across the “finish line” and have access to better long-term workforce opportunities (and potentially higher wages), thereby breaking a cycle of dependence on public benefits programs.

CDHE works in collaboration with our state agency partners, institutions of higher education, county human service agencies, and external groups and stakeholders to elevate this work and address the “human needs” that students face.

**My Colorado Journey** provides robust community information supports via its *Connect me to Services and Resources* content, ensuring that students know about available human services.

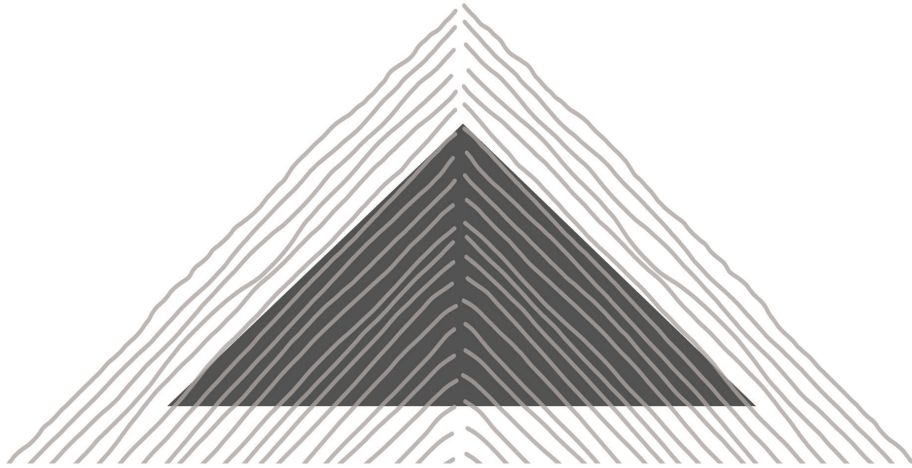
**CDHE’s partners’ Single Stop and RAND Corporation** received a nearly \$3.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to pilot and study the deployment of the Single Stop model on five institutions of higher education in Colorado. This model will better connect students to the various public benefits (for which they may be eligible) and assess the impact of those public benefits on increasing postsecondary student success.

**CDHE is working with our partners** to develop checklists of best practices for institutions of higher education around food insecurity and the mental health needs of students. These “Hunger-Free Campus” and “Healthy Minds Campus” checklists aim to create a statewide framework and thought community for all partners to support students.

## Precollegiate Programs

Precollegiate support programs, like the model promoted by the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI), help students explore postsecondary options and acknowledge that students bring several layers of context to their postsecondary decision making. Precollegiate programs like GEAR UP, COSI, and TRIO show that early investments in students have a great return on investment for persistence and completion. Programs that help students holistically consider life experiences, background, and college-going knowledge and modify programming to fit student needs, can better guide college choice and enrollment.

**In our next section, recommendations, informed by data presented here, promote greater communication, equity-minded practices, and policy changes.**



# 2

## *Recommendations*

These recommendations seek to create a framework, informed by data, to identify elements and actions that collectively create an equitable education system.



## Communication

Addressing equity in education should be a public value communicated strongly with urgency. The ECC and CDHE can create structures to highlight successes throughout our state and share data—through CDHE reports or other national research organizations, to continue a focus on the change of programs and structures that historically have left large portions of students behind. *These recommendations focus on communicating urgency, commitment, and expansion of equity-minded practices to promote safety, enrollment, persistence, and eventual success.*

As a state, we can demonstrate a commitment by (1) facilitating ongoing statewide convenings and conversations to elevate best practices, promote equity and diversity development, and bring in local and national experts; (2) creating a “day of dialogue” where campus presidents, staff and counselors have a public signing of the action plan within the ECC report, and (3) create a new position at the Department called the Chief Educational Equity Officer (CEEO).

Institutions, departments, and government agencies can (1) do more with existing data to inform the implementation of practices that support equity, and (2) work to responsibly collect and disaggregate data to better tell stories of intersectionalities, including qualitative stories of student experiences and successes.

ECC, CDHE, and campuses can begin to leverage and expand the state's equity toolkit to support these efforts and develop a train the trainer programs to create competency for professionals working in the education sector: <http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit/teaching-learning/>.

Students can better understand and navigate postsecondary pathways with the increase of access and awareness of precollegiate programs, using platforms like My Colorado Journey, and encouraging FAFSA completion.

# Equity Minded Practices

The following are specific recommendations for campus-level implementation and consideration.

- Create Guaranteed Transfer Pathways that support cultural responsiveness and relevance coursework. Address curriculum to specifically support anti-racist and anti-bias work can make real improvements in how students show up to support fellow peers, staff, and administration, and ultimately participate in society.
- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) curriculum into current coursework. This increases accessibility for current students and educates all students on DEI.
- Implement the required curriculum, like ethnic studies, to allow students to see themselves in the curriculum and create shared cultural understanding across students.
- Expand programs that incentivize the some-college, no degree students to return and succeed (i.e., Pueblo Community College's Return to Earn program). Include intentional wraparound student supports help students navigate hard to access programs and resources and close gaps on race, income, student parents, etc.
- Develop comprehensive approaches to financial aid to ensure more students access available aid.
- Emphasize and improve recruitment, retention, and success of faculty and staff of color, and create pathways for professional growth.



- Work toward designations like Hunger-Free and Healthy Minds to help campuses address social determinants of success.
- Conduct campus climate surveys and needs assessments to identify specific changes required to ensure campus practices are aligned with anti-racist and equitable pedagogy.
- Create opportunities for student-led initiatives with resources and shared governance.




# Policies

In the development and modification of policies, use a critical equity lens.

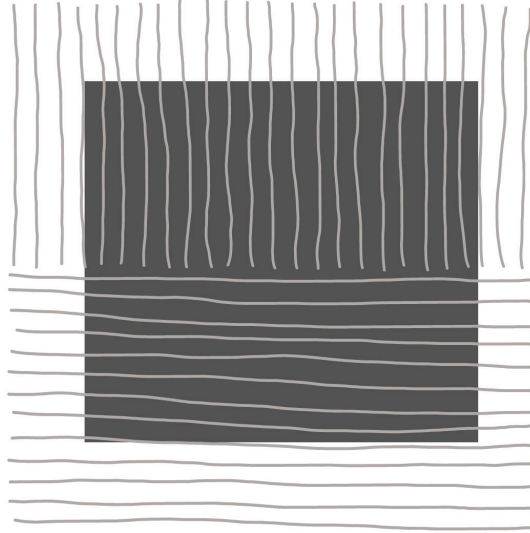
The following are policy recommendations:

- Conduct an audit of all policies at the department to ensure policies are aligned with anti-racist and equitable practice.
- Increase student supports:
  - Provide flexible scholarships with robust student support/navigation, creating intentional programs that address larger equity gaps in careers and subject matter
  - Provide equitable access and preparation to higher education
  - Expand pre-collegiate counseling and support services using COSI's models to help students with FAFSA completion
  - Include FAFSA completion as a graduation guideline
  - Support family-centered wraparound student services that address family/cultural needs, holistically
- Expand support for emergency scholarships
- Provide adequate **concurrent enrollment** access for geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged school districts to ensure students have access to sustainable opportunities
- Utilize institutional goal-setting ([S.B. 17-297](#)) as a true equity exercise to measure success and progress
- Revise the role of faculty and staff for accountability to encourage campus members to participate in EDI work.
- Require governing boards to comply with the same requirements of the Governor's Executive Order on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/7047192-D-2020-175-Equity-Diversity-and-Inclusion-for.html>

- Create better adult education alignment within K-12, higher education, and workforce. Expand stackable credential pathways and invest in work-based learning.
- Ensure all students have equitable access to the resources needed to complete their education, such as internet access, housing, etc.
- Review and develop funding structures used to incentivize equitable outcomes (both K-12 and postsecondary) so that low-income, first-generation, and students of color are not disproportionately impacted. Consider the expansion of in-state financial aid eligibility to students who currently cannot access it.
- Analyze the rollout of the new funding formula created in 2020 to ensure equity is a focus and ensure that equity remains a priority in the next funding review.
- Remove statutory requirements that prevent flexibility for public 4-year institutional governing boards to make their own admissions decisions with an equitable access lens.
- Expand availability of and participation in reverse transfer programs
- Examine policy structures for prior learning assessments
  - Associated costs and accessibility
  - Process for receiving credit and evaluation and transferability across state
  - Research and analyze existing structural challenges with the Prior Learning Assessment and make recommendations for improvement
- Improve data sharing abilities across state agencies. Well-governed data sharing should be the rule, not the exception.



In the following section,  
the ECC and CDHE present specific  
action steps that can be taken by  
the ECC, CDHE, and lawmakers.



# 3

## *Action Plan*



The action plan provides practical improvement strategies for ongoing activities over the time period of the Coalition; and establishes measures of success and accountability structures to promote enrollment, persistence, and completion against equity gaps.

To begin work toward the recommendations outlined in the previous section, the ECC Action Plan focuses on five key themes:

- 
- 1** Funding to increase access to development tools for success
  - 2** Research analysis of existing policy identified as having systemic barriers for students of color
  - 3** Improve statewide outreach and marketing to increase student access to opportunities
  - 4** Embed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEI\_A) practices into institutional culture and hiring practices
  - 5** Elevate and centralize student voice





# Equity Champions Coalition

The Colorado Equity Champions Coalition commits to these improvement strategies:

**Establish and create an annual statewide day of dialogue, supported by CDHE. Potential agenda:**

- *State of Equity* address pulling information from section 1 of this ECC Report and the most recent available data on closing equity gaps presented during the State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent Government (SMART) Act Hearing
- DEI development (including equity and bias training) via the equity toolkit
- Communication of this action plan developed as part of the ECC Report and plan for continued engagement of partners
- Pledge signing with campus presidents and student organizations committing to the work outlined in this report
- Attendance by campus leaders, staff, faculty, counselors, legislature, students, and community partners

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**Build out administrative content to include in the equity toolkit:** a) framework for an audit of campus policies, b) resources for college climate assessments, c) audit of state policies. The framework would ensure anti-racist and equitable practices are the foundation of the policies.

- Consider implementing Aims Community College Council for Equity and Inclusion's campus policy audit checklist and recommendations
- Massachusetts' (TIE partner) principles for auditing state policies. It is built off of University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education: [https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final\\_Web.pdf](https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final_Web.pdf)

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**Elevate student voice, and empower students to participate in meaningful ways that are right for them, all to ultimately inform change.**

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**Build effective metrics to measure qualitative and quantitative success.** The ECC, in collaboration with the Office of Equity and Inclusion, can thoughtfully build effective metrics to measure qualitative and quantitative success. The ECC recommends the Office of Equity and Inclusion serve as a vehicle of accountability for all proposed recommendations, ensuring that the lived experiences of those affected by institutional changes (mainly students, faculty, and staff) are proactively captured and incorporated into definitions of success. The measures should also assess success toward institutional practices and culture change.



# The State

The State of Colorado, including the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Higher Education and the Governor's office can:

## Develop a policy that recommends institutions of higher education:

- Implement elements of the EDI executive order to address:
  - HR policies and training
  - Develop equity action plans or equivalent
- Use the assessment framework to examine campus policies utilizing recommended rubrics, and report back as part of the annual goal-setting process established in S.B. 17-297
- Determine how data from campus climate surveys can be utilized in campus self-assessments
- Develop and support the process for counter-productive reporting practices

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**Audit of S.B. 17-297** reports addressing climate surveys, campus policies, and institutional actions to identify themes and make recommendations for campus change and associated funding. This document serves as a foundation for starting work on campuses and identifying additional resources needed.

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**Audit of Department policies** using an assessment developed by ECC to examine statewide policies and make recommendations for change. Make recommendations to ensure anti-racist and equitable practices are at the foundation. Utilize Massachusetts, as a resource: [https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final\\_Web.pdf](https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final_Web.pdf).

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**Conduct an analysis of credit for prior learning policy** and examine if students of color, low-income students, and diverse identities can access credit for prior work/learning. This study should include the cost to the student and the cost to the institution. Make recommendations on how the state and institutions can make prior learning credit more affordable and accessible to students of color, low-income students, and diverse identities.

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### Also, the Department should:

- Market the equity toolkit and develop a communications campaign
- Gather success stories from institutions of higher education and highlight impact practices
- Publish supplemental white papers and data
- Convene campuses for lectures from national equity leaders with demonstrated impact and results
- Improve data-sharing and analysis across state agencies

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**Improve messaging for available resources** to holistic family-centered support students, such as SNAP benefits, financial aid, childcare, etc.

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**Consider collecting a broader set of student demographic** identifiers from institutions, so that equity based on identities beyond race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status can be assessed.

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## Legislature

The Colorado Legislature should consider policies that address funding, access to postsecondary degrees and credentials, and data, specifically focusing on:

- Improve student supports including navigation and coaching, and emergency aid
- Create skills-based and non-degree scholarships
- Address equitable access and preparedness to higher education
- Expand concurrent enrollment support for schools to prioritize addressing equity gaps
- Address gaps in prior learning assessments and credit for prior learning policy implementation
- Improve data-sharing abilities and agreements across state agencies such as CDE, CDHE, CDLE, and CDHS

# Conclusion



## *Creating a Colorado for All*

means that we acknowledge that our state must have an intentional and specific focus on race and ethnicity to erase educational equity gaps.

This is a historic time in American history, one in which the choices we make set the stage for how Colorado will look in the coming years, and how far we go in the fight for equality. We must live and breathe equity, infusing it in all of our work. If we fail, others will perceive us as neutral on the topic, and follow suit. Success allows us to build coalitions and collaborative networks on campuses to better support students of color and eliminate gaps in who enrolls, persists, and completes higher education and who does not.

We know that leadership continues to be an essential pillar of Colorado's equity work. Campus presidents, department staff, and commissioners must provide continued enthusiasm and stress the importance of equity. Our North star is clear, having the vision written into CDHE's Master Plan ensures this goal is carried through changes in gubernatorial administrations and executive directors. We ask campus leaders to sign on, join us, and commit to making a better Colorado for all our students.

# A Community Working Toward the Same Goals

We recognize the various partners supporting work toward inclusive and equitable outcomes for Coloradans and whose missions align with our work:

**The Office of Educational Equity** at the Department of Higher Education establishes statewide policy, acts as a facilitator of best practices and technical assistance providers to remove equity gaps in the state. The office is committed to promoting the public value of higher education and encouraging the general public to direct funding in a way that mirrors the diversity in our state and erases racial/ethnic/income equity gaps in Colorado.

**The Equity Champions Coalition (ECC)** advances statewide policy and informs higher education support and services for Colorado's most vulnerable students to remove educational completion gaps in the state by race, ethnicity, and income. The Coalition serves as advisors to CDHE by developing a collective vision and strategic direction to guide the Office of Educational Equity. The ECC works alongside CDHE to guide the implementation of high-impact strategies across institutions, collaborate on best practices, collect and analyze data, and identify necessary work to continue to close gaps.

The **Rocky Mountain Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education** (RMADOHE) is a local chapter of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, which seeks to *lead higher education toward inclusive excellence through institutional transformation.*

The **Colorado Equity Alliance** is a collaborative effort to level the playing field and create systems in which all Coloradans have the chance to thrive. The Alliance, comprising representatives from state agencies and community organizations, aims to operationalize equity and make sure it is woven into the fabric of state governance.

The **Talent Equity Agenda** is published by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC), a governor-appointed, public-private partnership to advise, oversee, and integrate the work of the Colorado talent development network. The CWDC's vision is that every Colorado employer has access to a skilled workforce, and every Coloradan has the opportunity for meaningful employment, resulting in individual and statewide economic prosperity.

In 2019, the **Bell Policy Center** began convening dozens of stakeholders in the future of work and learning ecosystems to create an actionable agenda to address equity gaps within these systems. The **Bell Policy Center's Actionable Agenda for the Future of Work & Learning** encompasses key structural, programmatic, and policy changes to the K-12, postsecondary, and workforce development ecosystems.



# Language and Definitions

To calculate the various metrics outlined in this report, CDHE receives data from several sources, including Colorado public postsecondary institutions of higher education (IHEs) via the department's SURDS (Student Unit Record Data System) and unemployment insurance (UI) wage data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. The sharing of data among IHEs and CDHE, as well as data sharing between CDHE and other state agencies, has allowed CDHE to provide valuable insights into student postsecondary success. Following is a breakdown of several of the metrics outlined in this report and the methods used to calculate those metrics.

**Program Groupings:** Degree programs were grouped into categories using two-digit CIP codes and the Complete College America Meta Major framework that has been adopted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, SHEEO, NCHEMS and other foundations. Grouping programs provides higher match rates (by overarching program) and more aggregated counts of students (to address data privacy concerns).

**Cost Data:** To allow for national comparisons, state-level published tuition and fees estimates were taken from the College Board's [Trends in College Pricing report](#). These data are closely aligned with the numbers reported in the department's annual [Tuition and Fees report](#). Institutional and program data on tuition and fees in this report come from the CDHE Tuition and Fees report. Estimates for housing, food, books and other expenses used to calculate cost of attendance are from the CCHE's approved student budget parameters. Finally, average financial aid data is derived from data reported on the Financial Aid portion of the [Integrated Postsecondary Data System \(IPEDS\)](#).

**Debt:** State- and institutional-level debt was calculated using the 2017-18 SURDS Financial Aid file. It includes students who completed a degree at a Colorado institution of higher education and were classified as resident students at the time of graduation. For graduates of four-year institutions, it includes debt that they incurred up to six years before graduation; for graduates of two-year institutions, it includes debt that was incurred up to three years before graduation.

**Time to Credential and Credits at Credential:**

*Time to credential* was calculated using completion data from the 2017-18 SURDS Degree file. Of those who completed a degree at a Colorado public institution of higher education (IHE), the student's first-time enrollment at that same Colorado IHE was found. Additionally, a student's first-time enrollment was matched to the type of credential the student was seeking. For example, if a student received a bachelor's degree, the student's first-time, bachelor's-degree-seeking status entry was used. Based on these data, a time to credential (in years) was calculated. Calculations for associate degrees and certificates used a similar method. Students receiving a credential via the state's Reverse Transfer process were removed from the calculations. *Credits at credential* data was calculated using the maximum cumulative credits hours accumulated by a student at the time of their credential completion.

**Median Earnings:** CDHE's work over several years to link credential completion and UI wage data has resulted in the ability to provide valuable insights into actual wage outcomes for students who complete and credential in Colorado and stay in Colorado after graduation to work. Median one-, five- and 10-year earnings data were calculated, matching degree completion and UI wage data. A detailed methodology for these calculations as well as median wage outcomes by IHE, program grouping (2-digit CIP) and program (4-digit CIP) can be found via [CDHE's Postsecondary Degree Earnings Outcomes Tool](#).

**North American Industry Classification System**

**(NAICS):** The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) represents a continuing cooperative effort among Statistics Canada, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) and the Economic Classification Policy Committee (ECPC) of the United States, acting on behalf of the Office of Management and Budget, to create and maintain a common industry classification system. NAICS was originally developed to provide a consistent framework for the collection, analysis and dissemination of industrial statistics used by government policy analysts, academics and researchers, the business community and the public. See the [2017 North American Industry Classification System \(NAICS\) Manual](#) for more information on structure and industry classifications.

**Education as an Industry: Colleges, Universities and Professional Schools (NAICS 611310)**

This industry is composed of establishments primarily engaged in furnishing academic courses and granting degrees at baccalaureate or graduate levels. The requirement for admission is at least a high school diploma or equivalent general academic training. Instruction may be provided in diverse settings, such as the establishment's or client's training facilities, educational institutions, the workplace or the home, and through diverse means, such as correspondence, television, the internet, or other

electronic and distance-learning methods. The training provided by these establishments may include the use of simulators and simulation methods.

[MIT Living Wage Calculator](#): The living wage calculator estimates the living wage needed to support families of 12 different compositions in various geographical areas. See the MIT Living Wage Calculator Technical Documentation for full methodology and definitions.

**EMSI:** EMSI provides traditional labor market data, job posting analytics and compensation data using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, online profiles and resumes, online job postings and other government sources. See [EMSI Data Release Notes](#) for a full list of data sources.

**CIP/SOC Crosswalk:** The purpose of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Crosswalk is to provide data users with a resource for relating CIP and SOC. A CIP-SOC relationship indicates that postsecondary instructional programs classified in the CIP category typically prepare individuals directly for jobs classified in the SOC category. See the [guidelines for using the CIP to SOC Crosswalk](#) for more information.

*(Note: in EMSI data, this industry includes private-sector establishments only.)*

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The ECC and CDHE understand the limitations in the resources available; part of the Office of Educational Equity's mission is to be conscious and aware of how students are categorized in ways that do not fit their own identities or do not honor the intersectionality of identities that impact the way higher education systems make their experiences different on campus based on these identities. The recommendations section of this report provides further discussion of how our state collects information about students and their identities and how we can improve this.

Additional discussion on racial and ethnic data considerations for collection and reporting is available from the Colorado Equity Alliance: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UCO5fb9JdxX6l2i8ZnNfHkAzt3zqmj7l/view>

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OF REFERENCE:**

- **CDHE Equity Toolkit Glossary**  
<http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit/glossary/>
- **Colorado Office of Health Equity: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary of Terms**  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gfmbsG-ceaJPW8zwmcyR-ezp7sVJuBTt/view?usp=sharing>
- **Equity Alliance Toolbox Google Folder**  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yrf1SBG1cDK\\_IHe15IAWuHtsGtHxuxbd](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yrf1SBG1cDK_IHe15IAWuHtsGtHxuxbd)



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