

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 26-0247.01 Chelsea Princell x4335

HOUSE BILL 26-1006

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Velasco and Martinez,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Roberts,

House Committees

Education

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING THE DESIGNATION OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER

102 EDUCATION AS THRIVING INSTITUTIONS.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill requires the department of higher education (department) to:

- Identify institutions of higher education (institutions) that meet the definition and outcome standards to be designated as a thriving institution;
- Notify each institution that meets the outcome standards to

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

be designated as a thriving institution and request the institution to respond within 10 calendar days with the institution's decision of whether to be recognized as a thriving institution;

- Post on the department's website the names of the institutions that earn a thriving institution designation and agree to be listed as a thriving institution; and
- Notify the general assembly of the names of the institutions that are recognized as thriving institutions.

The bill requires the department to establish an advisory committee to provide input to the department on the outcome and recognition standards, and continuous improvements set by the department to identify institutions that meet the requirements for one or more thriving institution designations.

The bill requires the advisory committee to submit a report to the department summarizing the outcome standards for thriving institution designations determined by the advisory committee, practices and continuous improvement efforts, and recommendations for policy or resource alignment to support the state's attainment and workforce goals. The department is required to include this report as part of its "SMART Act" hearing and submit the report to the Colorado commission on higher education and to each institution of higher education's governing board.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) Expanding educational opportunities and improving outcomes
5 for historically underserved student populations, including Hispanic or
6 Latino students, first-generation students, students with low incomes,
7 adult learners, transfer students, and students attending colleges and
8 universities in rural areas, are compelling state interests that are critical
9 to Colorado's prosperity, civil vitality, and workforce talent pipeline;

10 (b) Recognition of institutional performance should be grounded
11 in student outcomes and performance rather than being based solely on
12 enrollment share;

13 (c) Increasing degree and credential attainment through student

1 persistence, retention, and successful transfers and aligning education and
2 training to labor market outcomes are necessary to achieve the state's
3 postsecondary attainment and workforce goals;

4 (d) The Colorado commission on higher education's strategic plan
5 calls for increasing the number of Coloradans with skills obtained while
6 in high school or through postsecondary education that, at a minimum,
7 result in lifetime earnings that exceed the cost of attendance; and

8 (e) Outcome-based state designations recognizing institutional
9 excellence provide policy continuity, promote accountability, and support
10 continuous improvement aligned with the state's attainment and
11 workforce goals.

12 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add 23-1-144** as
13 follows:

14 **23-1-144. Thriving institution designations - advisory
15 committee - report - rules - definitions.**

16 (1) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE
17 REQUIRES:

18 (a) "ADVISORY COMMITTEE" MEANS THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
19 ON THRIVING INSTITUTION OUTCOMES CREATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION
20 (4) OF THIS SECTION.

21 (b) "INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION" MEANS A PUBLIC
22 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, INCLUDING A LOCAL DISTRICT
23 COLLEGE, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 23-71-102, AND AREA TECHNICAL
24 COLLEGES, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 23-60-103.

25 (c) "LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES" MEANS WORKFORCE RESULTS OF
26 STUDENTS UPON POSTSECONDARY-EDUCATION COMPLETION AS
27 ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT WITH INPUT FROM THE ADVISORY

1 COMMITTEE.

2 (d) "RURAL CAMPUS" MEANS A CAMPUS OF AN INSTITUTION OF
3 HIGHER EDUCATION THAT:

4 (I) IS LOCATED IN A COUNTY DESIGNATED AS A NONMETROPOLITAN
5 OR MICROPOLITAN AREA BY THE UNITED STATES OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT
6 AND BUDGET;

7 (II) ENROLLS STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM A RURAL SCHOOL
8 DISTRICT OR SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, AS THE TERMS ARE DEFINED
9 IN SECTION 22-2-146.5, AT A RATE DETERMINED BY THE ADVISORY
10 COMMITTEE; OR

11 (III) IS RURAL BASED ON GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION, POPULATION
12 DENSITY, COMMUNITY, OR OTHER FACTORS, AS DETERMINED BY THE
13 ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

14 (e) "STUDENT SUCCESS EXPERT" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH
15 DEMONSTRATED EXPERTISE IN ASSISTING POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
16 WITH SUCCESSFUL CREDENTIAL AND DEGREE COMPLETION OR
17 EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES TO CLOSE ATTAINMENT GAPS AMONG
18 HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENT POPULATIONS.

19 (f) "THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATION" MEANS A DESIGNATION
20 GRANTED TO A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

21 (2) A THRIVING INSTITUTION IS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
22 EDUCATION THAT DEMONSTRATES STRONG PERFORMANCE, AS DEFINED BY
23 THE DEPARTMENT WITH INPUT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
24 ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (5) OF THIS SECTION, FOR CERTAIN STUDENT
25 POPULATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL MISSIONS, OR WORKFORCE ROLES THAT ARE
26 RECOGNIZED IN:

27 (a) FEDERAL LAW, INCLUDING THOSE NOTED IN THE FEDERAL

1 "HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965", 20 U.S.C. SEC. 1001 AND 20 U.S.C.
2 SEC. 1057-1059d;

3 (b) FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMS
4 AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO 20 U.S.C. SEC. 1070a;

5 (c) THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION-TO-WORKFORCE
6 ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO 29 U.S.C.
7 SEC. 3111 ET SEQ.;

8 (d) COLORADO STATUTES GOVERNING HIGHER EDUCATION,
9 WORKFORCE PROGRAMS, AND ADULT EDUCATION; AND

10 (e) FEDERAL OR STATE ACCOUNTABILITY, REPORTING, OR DATA
11 SYSTEMS AUTHORIZED BY STATUTE.

12 (3) (a) WITHIN THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE ANNUAL PUBLIC RELEASE
13 OF ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION DATA FROM EACH STATE
14 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2026 AND EACH YEAR THEREAFTER,
15 THE DEPARTMENT, WITH INPUT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
16 ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (5) OF THIS SECTION, SHALL:

17 (I) IDENTIFY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT MEET THE
18 OUTCOME STANDARDS IDENTIFIED IN SUBSECTION (4) OF THIS SECTION FOR
19 ONE OR MORE THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS;

20 (II) NOTIFY EACH INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT MEETS
21 THE OUTCOME STANDARDS IDENTIFIED IN SUBSECTION (4) OF THIS SECTION
22 FOR ONE OR MORE THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS AND REQUEST
23 THAT THE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESPOND WITHIN TEN
24 CALENDAR DAYS WITH A DECISION OF WHETHER THE INSTITUTION OF
25 HIGHER EDUCATION WOULD LIKE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR ITS THRIVING
26 INSTITUTION DESIGNATION;

27 (III) POST ON THE DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE THE NAMES OF THE

1 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT EARN A THRIVING INSTITUTION
2 DESIGNATION AND AGREE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR THRIVING
3 INSTITUTION DESIGNATION; AND

4 (IV) NOTIFY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NAME OF EACH
5 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT EARNS A THRIVING INSTITUTION
6 DESIGNATION.

7 (b) THE OUTCOME STANDARDS USED TO DETERMINE THRIVING
8 INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS, AS REQUIRED BY SUBSECTION (3)(a)(I) OF
9 THIS SECTION, MUST BE USED TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR THE STUDENT
10 POPULATIONS IMPACTED BY A THRIVING INSTITUTION'S DESIGNATION
11 WITHOUT DIMINISHING THE SUCCESS OF OTHER STUDENT POPULATIONS AT
12 THE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

13 (c) AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S DESIGNATION AS A
14 THRIVING INSTITUTION DOES NOT CREATE AN ENTITLEMENT TO STATE
15 FUNDING AND DOES NOT REQUIRE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO REPLACE OR
16 SUPPLEMENT FEDERAL OR PRIVATE FUNDING TO THE INSTITUTION OF
17 HIGHER EDUCATION.

18 (4) AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
19 ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (5) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT
20 SHALL SET OUTCOME STANDARDS, MEASURES, DATA SOURCES,
21 CALCULATION METHODS, VALIDITY PROTECTIONS, PERFORMANCE
22 THRESHOLDS, MULTI-TIER RECOGNITION LEVELS, AND REVIEW PERIODS
23 USED TO EVALUATE INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE THRIVING
24 INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS. THE STANDARDS MUST:

25 (a) RELY ON EXISTING STATE OR FEDERAL DATA COLLECTIONS AND
26 NOT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONAL REPORTING BEYOND EXISTING
27 SUBMISSIONS;

3 (c) PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ALIGNED WITH THE
4 STATE'S ESTABLISHED POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT TARGETS AND
5 STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENTAL PRIORITIES; AND

6 (d) AT A MINIMUM, INCLUDE GRADUATION, CREDENTIAL AND
7 DEGREE COMPLETION, RETENTION, TRANSFER SUCCESS, ADULT LEARNER
8 REENTRY AND COMPLETION, AND LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES.

14 (b) THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING
15 MEMBERS, EACH APPOINTED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
16 DEPARTMENT:

17 (I) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY;

18 (II) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AS DEFINED
19 IN SECTION 23-81-101;

20 (III) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGE, AS
21 DEFINED IN SECTION 23-71-102;

22 (IV) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A RURAL CAMPUS;

23 (V) AT LEAST TWO INDIVIDUALS WITH RESEARCH EXPERTISE IN
24 THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR A CLOSELY RELATED DISCIPLINE;

25 (VI) A STUDENT ENROLLED AT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
26 EDUCATION;

27 (VII) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN ORGANIZATION THAT PROVIDES

1 PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND POLICY GUIDANCE FOR FEDERALLY, STATE, AND
2 LOCALLY FUNDED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS;

3 (VIII) A STUDENT SUCCESS REPRESENTATIVE WITH
4 DEMONSTRATED EXPERIENCE IN STUDENT AFFAIRS; AND

5 (IX) AN INDIVIDUAL WITH EXPERTISE IN LAWFUL DATA USE
6 RELATED TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND METHODS FOR ENSURING
7 COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL PRIVACY LAWS.

8 (c) THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SERVE WITHOUT
9 COMPENSATION BUT MAY BE REIMBURSED FOR ACTUAL AND NECESSARY
10 EXPENSES INCURRED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

11 (6) ON OR BEFORE NOVEMBER 15, 2026, AND EACH NOVEMBER 15
12 THEREAFTER, THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE
13 DEPARTMENT THAT INCLUDES A SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOME STANDARDS
14 FOR THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS DETERMINED BY THE ADVISORY
15 COMMITTEE, PRACTICES AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS, AND
16 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY OR RESOURCE ALIGNMENT TO SUPPORT
17 THE STATE'S ATTAINMENT AND WORKFORCE GOALS. THE DEPARTMENT
18 SHALL INCLUDE THE REPORT IN ITS "SMART ACT" HEARING, REQUIRED
19 PURSUANT TO SECTION 2-7-203, AND SUBMIT THE REPORT TO THE
20 COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TO EACH
21 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S GOVERNING BOARD.

22 (7) THE DEPARTMENT MAY SEEK, ACCEPT, AND EXPEND GIFTS,
23 GRANTS, OR DONATIONS FROM PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SOURCES FOR THE
24 PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION.

25 (8) ALL USE AND DISCLOSURE OF STUDENT INFORMATION FOR
26 PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION MUST COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE STATE
27 AND FEDERAL PRIVACY LAWS. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL AGGREGATE DATA

1 TO PREVENT THE DISCLOSURE OF STUDENT PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE
2 INFORMATION.

3 (9) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ADOPT RULES AS NECESSARY TO
4 IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

5 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds,
6 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
7 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for
8 the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state
9 institutions.