

**Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

REVISED

*This Version Includes All Amendments Adopted
on Second Reading in the Second House*

LLS NO. 26-0247.01 Chelsea Princell x4335

HOUSE BILL 26-1006

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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.*

SENATE
Amended 2nd Reading
April 30, 2026

HOUSE
3rd Reading Unamended
March 25, 2026

HOUSE
Amended 2nd Reading
March 24, 2026

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 - 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 
26 (c) "LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES" MEANS THE INCOME EARNINGS
27 OF STUDENTS UPON POSTSECONDARY-EDUCATION COMPLETION

1 CATEGORIZED BY DEGREE USING EXISTING STATE OR FEDERAL DATA
2 ALREADY COLLECTED OR MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

3 (d) "RURAL CAMPUS" MEANS A CAMPUS OF AN INSTITUTION OF
4 HIGHER EDUCATION THAT IS RURAL BASED ON GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION,
5 POPULATION DENSITY, COMMUNITY, STUDENT ENROLLMENT, OR OTHER
6 FACTORS, AS DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

7 (e) "STUDENT SUCCESS EXPERT" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH
8 DEMONSTRATED EXPERTISE IN ASSISTING POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS
9 WITH SUCCESSFUL CREDENTIAL AND DEGREE COMPLETION OR
10 EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES TO CLOSE ATTAINMENT GAPS AMONG
11 HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED STUDENT POPULATIONS.

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

14 (2) A THRIVING INSTITUTION IS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
15 EDUCATION THAT DEMONSTRATES STRONG PERFORMANCE, AS DEFINED BY
16 THE DEPARTMENT WITH INPUT FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
17 ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (5) OF THIS SECTION, FOR CERTAIN STUDENT
18 POPULATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL MISSIONS, OR WORKFORCE ROLES THAT ARE
19 RECOGNIZED IN:

20 (a) FEDERAL LAW, INCLUDING THOSE NOTED IN THE FEDERAL
21 "HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965", 20 U.S.C. SEC. 1001 AND 20 U.S.C.
22 SEC. 1057-1059d;

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

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

1 (d) COLORADO STATUTES GOVERNING HIGHER EDUCATION,
2 WORKFORCE PROGRAMS, AND ADULT EDUCATION; AND

3 (e) FEDERAL OR STATE ACCOUNTABILITY, REPORTING, OR DATA
4 SYSTEMS AUTHORIZED BY STATUTE.

5 (3) (a) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2027, THE DEPARTMENT
6 SHALL ESTABLISH THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS. AFTER THE
7 DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHES THE INITIAL THRIVING INSTITUTION
8 DESIGNATIONS AND THE OUTCOME STANDARDS USED TO INFORM THE
9 THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS AS REQUIRED BY SUBSECTION (5) OF
10 THIS SECTION, AND AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL
11 PUBLIC RELEASE OF ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION DATA
12 FROM EACH STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2027 AND EACH
13 YEAR THEREAFTER, THE DEPARTMENT, WITH INPUT FROM THE ADVISORY
14 COMMITTEE, IF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAS SCHEDULED MEETINGS FOR
15 THAT CALENDAR YEAR, SHALL:

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

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

26 (III) POST ON THE DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE THE NAMES OF THE
27 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT EARN A THRIVING INSTITUTION

1 DESIGNATION AND AGREE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR THRIVING
2 INSTITUTION DESIGNATION; AND

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

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

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

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

24 (a) RELY EXCLUSIVELY ON EXISTING STATE OR FEDERAL DATA
25 COLLECTED OR MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND NOT REQUIRE NEW
26 DATA ELEMENTS, NEW DATA COLLECTION, DATA MATCHING, OR
27 DATA-SHARING AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCIES

1 OR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION;

2 (b) UTILIZE EXISTING METHODS OF COHORTING AND CALCULATING
3 OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE METRICS;

4 (c) ENSURE STATISTICAL VALIDITY AND COMPLIANCE WITH
5 PRIVACY LAWS;

6 (d) PROMOTE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ALIGNED WITH THE
7 STATE'S ESTABLISHED POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT TARGETS AND
8 STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENTAL PRIORITIES; AND

9 (e) AT A MINIMUM, INCLUDE EXISTING DATA CONCERNING
10 STUDENT PROGRESSION AND SUCCESS, SUCH AS DEGREE COMPLETION,
11 RETENTION, AND LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES.

12 (5) (a) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2027, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL
13 CONVENE AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THRIVING INSTITUTION
14 OUTCOMES. THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHALL MEET AT LEAST ONCE
15 DURING THE 2027 CALENDAR YEAR TO PROVIDE INPUT ON THE INITIAL
16 THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS AND THE OUTCOME STANDARDS
17 USED TO INFORM THE THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS. ONCE THIS
18 PURPOSE IS FULFILLED, THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHALL MEET ONLY IF
19 NEW THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS NEED TO BE ADDED OR IF THE
20 COMMISSION PROPOSES MATERIAL CHANGES TO THE OUTCOME STANDARDS
21 USED TO INFORM THE THRIVING INSTITUTION DESIGNATIONS.

22 (b) THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING
23 MEMBERS, EACH APPOINTED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
24 DEPARTMENT:

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

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

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

3 (IV) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM A RURAL CAMPUS;

4 (V) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
5 EDUCATION THAT RECEIVED A HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION
6 DESIGNATION FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON
7 OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2025;

8 (VI) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
9 EDUCATION THAT RECEIVED A FIRST GENERATION-SERVING INSTITUTION
10 DESIGNATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2025;

11 (VII) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
12 EDUCATION THAT RECEIVED A NATIVE AMERICAN-SERVING NON-TRIBAL
13 INSTITUTION DESIGNATION FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
14 EDUCATION ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2025;

15 (VIII) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
16 EDUCATION WITH A POPULATION OF PELL-ELIGIBLE UNDERGRADUATE
17 STUDENTS GREATER THAN THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE;

18 (IX) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
19 EDUCATION THAT HAS A POPULATION OF ADULT LEARNERS AND TRANSFER
20 STUDENTS THAT IS GREATER THAN THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE;

21 (X) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE COLORADO BUSINESS
22 COMMUNITY WITH EXPERIENCE IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OR
23 EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT RELATED TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
24 EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT;

25 (XI) AT LEAST TWO INDIVIDUALS WITH RESEARCH EXPERTISE IN
26 THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR A CLOSELY RELATED DISCIPLINE;

27 (XII) A STUDENT ENROLLED AT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER

1 EDUCATION;

2 (XIII) A REPRESENTATIVE FROM AN ORGANIZATION THAT
3 PROVIDES PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND POLICY GUIDANCE FOR FEDERALLY,
4 STATE, AND LOCALLY FUNDED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS;

5 (XIV) A STUDENT SUCCESS REPRESENTATIVE WITH
6 DEMONSTRATED EXPERIENCE IN STUDENT AFFAIRS; AND

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

10 (c) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT MAY APPOINT
11 INDIVIDUALS TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE THAT MEET THE APPOINTMENT
12 CRITERIA OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND SIT ON ANOTHER COUNCIL,
13 COMMISSION, OR STAKEHOLDER GROUP IN ORDER TO AVOID DUPLICATION
14 AND REDUCE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.

15 (d) MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MAY
16 SATISFY MULTIPLE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES DETAILED IN SUBSECTION
17 (5)(b) OF THIS SECTION.

18 (e) THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SERVE WITHOUT
19 COMPENSATION BUT MAY BE REIMBURSED FOR ACTUAL AND NECESSARY
20 EXPENSES INCURRED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

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22 (6) 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 (7) 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.

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4 **SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
5 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
6 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August
7 12, 2026, if adjournment sine die is on May 13, 2026); except that, if a
8 referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the
9 state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act
10 within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect
11 unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
12 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
13 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.