

STATE OF COLORADO

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**DRAFT - Option if JBC
wishes to move more
quickly than a regular
RFI timeline**

January 22, 2025

Dear Governor Polis, Director Ferrandino, Commissioner Cordova, and Executive Director Paccione:

During the Joint Budget Committee Budget Briefing on Higher Education on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, staff brought forward an Issue Brief regarding the Department of Higher Education operations, asking whether the Department of Higher Education's operations might be strengthened and optimized through a co-location with the Department of Education. Members of the Committee have asked to accelerate the investigation of such a move or other moves that might create a stronger and more resilient operational structure for the higher education system in Colorado.

JBC Staff have not proposed any changes to policy oversight of the Department of Higher Education, i.e. the Issue Brief does not suggest placing the Department of Higher Education under the oversight of the State Board of Education. Instead, JBC Staff have proposed investigating whether some administrative functions of the Department of Higher Education, including budgeting, accounting, fiscal management, and IT system/data management would be more robust if integrated within a larger entity, such as the Department of Education. Co-location might facilitate the coordination of select activities where the two departments have similar interests, e.g., the "big blur" and the development of a statewide student longitudinal data system.

No later than February 11, 2025, please provide the following information:

1. What level of operational consolidation with either the Department of Education or the Department of Labor and Employment would be needed to achieve a more robust operational environment for the Department of Higher Education?
 - a. What aspects of operational integration would enable more robust systems?
 - b. Would it be possible to create more redundant operational systems with simple co-location, or would a higher level of integration be required to achieve a more robust budgeting, accounting, fiscal management, and IT system/data management structure as stated above?
2. Pending a more thorough investigation of Department operations and structures, what structural and operation similarities do the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Education currently share? What significant differences exist? Please answer the same questions compared to the Department of Labor and Employment.

- a. How would existing alignment of any programs contribute to/assist with consolidation or integration on the operational side? On service to constituents?

We look forward to working together to find ways to better position the Department of Higher Education operations to serve the policies and goals of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and of the State.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bridges

Chair