



STATE OF COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

D. Rico Munn
Executive Director

November 30, 2009

To whom it may concern:

I am writing today to express the utmost support for the Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant application. Here in the Colorado Department of Higher Education we have a long history of longitudinal data development and analysis and we approve of and are in sync with the extensive CDE plan to develop their own longitudinal system and to unite it with ours. We are poised to make this happen given the current Colorado legislative environment, national policy guidance, and a spirit of collaboration between agencies. Our work in developing this grant application with colleagues at CDE leads us to conclude that with the help of this grant, our state can rapidly move to the leading edge of tracking students through the education pipeline and begin using the data to refine educational outcomes across the P-20 landscape. Our overarching goal in public higher education is "to and through" --to increase the number of students entering postsecondary education and then completing a degree. We believe this system will facilitate our goal by 1) providing data from pre-school through graduate school and 2) allowing for the use of data to inform policy to eliminate barriers to student success and aspiration throughout the pipeline.

As you will discover in the grant application, Colorado's efforts to establish shared data for analysis and improvement contains a unique caveat in that this was recently legislated to happen. State Legislation created a centralized governance authority, the Government Data Advisory Board (GDAB), to formalize policy on the State's data sharing needs. A subcommittee of this board, the Education Data Subcommittee, has been created and stands ready to provide the guidance and governance of all the underlying issues of policy surrounding the development of a cross agency longitudinal data system like the one Colorado proposes to build. The Colorado Department of Higher Education is represented on both these boards and is assisting, and indeed witnessing, the development of a culture of trust, data stewardship, and data sharing.

The ingredients are all in place to accomplish the goals set forth in your RFP, save one: Finance. The lack of a resource base to advance rapidly on these issues is a real barrier in today's fiscal landscape. This is why the SLDS investment is so vital to our progress. We expect to create an educational system with a holistic approach to education from pre-K through the labor force that continually diagnoses and then responds to barriers to student success and improves the development of the State's human capital. In this grant application, we have identified a crucial step toward that expectation and we ask that every consideration be made on behalf of Colorado's citizens.

Sincerely,

Rico Munn
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Higher Education