

**ABSTRACT: 2019 ELAM Institutional Action Project**  
**Innovative and Equitable Pathways to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Health Professions at the University of Colorado**  
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**Collaborators and Mentors: Chancellor Don Elliman, CU Anschutz; Chancellor Dorothy Horrell, CU Denver; Scot Chadwick, CU Denver & Anschutz**

**Topic Category: Education**

**Background, Significance of project:**

Limited capacity in education, an aging population, and increases in chronic conditions combine to drive an alarming shortage in hundreds of thousands of jobs in healthcare by 2020. In Colorado, low income, rural and minority populations are educated at disproportionately lower levels than whites. Dynamic interventions through low-cost, fully online program offerings present an innovative opportunity to increase access to education by first generation, rural and minority students in unprecedented numbers. Preparing these students for careers in healthcare offers an inventive solution that will reduce healthcare workforce shortages and increase economic viability for Colorado and the Mountain West. Colorado has 53 mountain peaks that are 14,000' or higher (known as "14ers"), and it is an audacious accomplishment to summit each of these peaks. Our "CU 14'er" program will offer a fully online undergraduate degree program for \$14,999, allowing students statewide to reach a critical educational summit.

**Purpose/Objectives:**

To establish CU as a preeminent institution for innovative, high-quality accessible online education in the health professions.

- Create a fully online undergraduate degree for \$14,999 by August 2022
- Increase access to educational opportunities for rural, first generation and minority students
- Improve quality and breadth of educational offerings at CU

**Methods/Approach:**

- Identify and recruit members to participate in a CU 14'er task force
- Work with University partners to develop state of the art instructional design and student success units
- Work with University partners to secure funding commitments to subsidize the CU 14'er
- Design curriculum
- Obtain approvals for curriculum and budget by Fall 2020
- Begin marketing, recruitment by Fall 2021
- Design and develop courses by Fall 2022
- Matriculate first cohort August 2022

**Outcomes/Results to date:**

- Created and built infrastructure for the CU Office of Digital Education
- A 60+ person Task Force comprising Faculty, Students and Staff has made program recommendations and established guidelines for Faculty preparedness, student support and program infrastructure
- Cultivated buy-in for digital education from at least six schools and colleges, multiple Faculty groups, the Bursar, Registrar, and Financial units

**Conclusion and Impact:**

An award winning, industry-sponsored fully online undergraduate degree available for \$14,999 that prepares graduates for employment and/or graduate training in health professions.

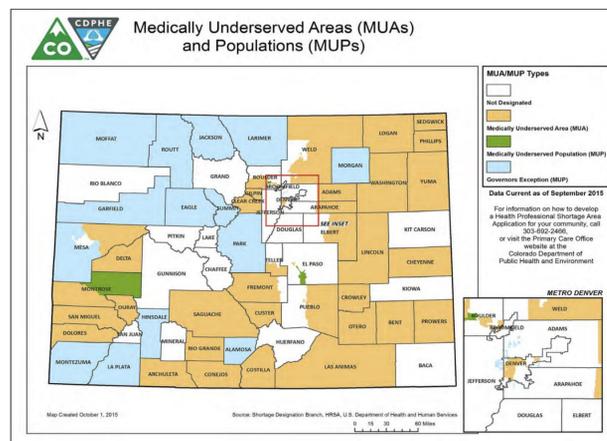
The following metrics will demonstrate the impact of this program by Spring of 2025:

- Increased student graduation rates by 15%
- Increase in rural, first generation, American Indian and Latino student enrollments
- Decreased time to degree completion by 10%
- Increase of \$10 million in revenue to CU



## Background

A large portion of Colorado qualifies as medically underserved



Chronic shortages in classroom space raises concerns that CU Denver and Anschutz may not be able to fully respond to demand with face-to-face programs. A rural "brain drain" calls for innovative solutions that will encourage more proximal education options for our rural students. Digital education has been shown to increase access to post-secondary training for minority and rural students.

## Purpose

To establish the University of Colorado (CU) as a preeminent institution for innovative, high-quality accessible online education in the health professions.

## Approach

Colorado has 53 mountain peaks rising 14,000 feet or higher ("14'ers") and it is an audacious accomplishment to summit them all. *The CU 14'er* is our goal--a fully online undergraduate program that prepares graduates for careers in the health professions for \$14,999 by August 2022; evaluation is focused explicitly on achieving this goal.

- Identify and recruit members to participate in CU 14'er Task Force
- Work collaboratively to develop state-of-the-art instructional design and student success units
- Obtain approvals for curriculum & budget by Fall 2020
- Design & obtain approvals for program by Fall 2021
- Create courses, market program by Fall 2021
- Matriculate first cohort August 2022

## Outcomes and Recommendations

- Created & built infrastructure for CU Office of Digital Education
- Cultivated buy-in from at least six schools and colleges and diverse constituents
- A diverse 60+ person task force has made suggestions for potentially competitive programs:

<b>Integrated Data Science (with Business, Engineering and Math)</b>	<b>Computer Science + "X" (where X can be Public Health, Nursing, Dentistry)</b>	<b>Communications &amp; Leadership</b>

## Next Steps

In the next year we will finalize program choice from among these or other options, solicit industry sponsors and begin program development

## Conclusion and Impact

Our award winning, industry-sponsored fully online undergraduate degree available for \$14,999 will prepare graduates for employment &/or graduate education in health professions. Our efforts will result in increased (a) graduation rates, (b) participation in post-secondary education by rural, American Indian and Latino students and (c) revenue to CU

The demand for health care professionals is growing statewide, although we are not uniformly preparing our population to fill these and other jobs

