

# Colorado College - CO

HLC ID 1043

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OPEN PATHWAY: Mid-Cycle Review

Review Date: 6/6/2022

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## Context and Nature of Review

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### Review Date

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6/6/2022

### Review Type:

Mid-Cycle Review

### Scope of Review

- Mid-Cycle Review
- 2021–22 COVID-19 Response Form

### Institutional Context

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Since its founding in 1874, Colorado College has consistently maintained its identity as an excellent liberal arts college. Continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (or its predecessor) since 1915, the institution has recently been accorded Open Pathway status, as part of which, the present Year Four Assurance Review is being conducted. The primary purpose of such reviews is to provide an update to the most recent comprehensive review (2018 in this case). The institution's Introduction to the online Assurance Argument offers a clear and effective overview of the continuities and changes at Colorado College since 2018. That Introduction also identifies a number of strengths of the institution (clarity of mission, strong leadership, reputational status, financial resources, enrollment stability and/or growth), presenting a very positive picture of the College's future.

Of course, the past two years have seen significant disruptions by the pandemic in all areas of our society, including higher education. In its online COVID-19 Institutional Response Form, Colorado College provided an informative account of how it has successfully managed the challenges of the pandemic, including a year (2020-2021) of fully remote learning. Despite these disruptions, the institution has not only continued to fulfill its mission, but also moved forward with a number of initiatives and projects to pursue improvements in its functioning. Of special note among these efforts is the College's Antiracism Commitment and its work to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in its student body, its faculty and staff and its curriculum and co-curricular programs.

In the changing context of higher education, Colorado College continues to stand out as a liberal arts college that remains faithful to its mission, while pursuing that mission through a distinctive Block Plan that offers intensive student learning experiences as well as close relationships of students and faculty.

As is standard for HLC Year Four reviews now, this review was conducted remotely over a five-week period. The team's work began with a careful examination of the 2018 HLC Reaffirmation Review Team Report, particularly noting any suggestions made by that team for institutional attention. The Colorado College Year Four Assurance Argument was, then, examined, with a particular focus on how those earlier team suggestions had been addressed and on any other recent changes that were identified by the institution. In the current team's review, some additional information was sought from the college (submitted via the Addendum site), but it was not deemed necessary to conduct any individual or group interviews with those on campus.

## **Interactions with Constituencies**

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This review was conducted remotely. In light of the information provided in the Assurance Argument, the team concluded that no individual or group interviews were needed to allow evaluation of the update provided online by the institution.

The team chair did join with the President of Colorado College, the Accreditation Liaison Officer, and the Dean of the Faculty for an initial Zoom meeting to discuss the (then) upcoming review process.

At the conclusion of the review, the team chair again held a Zoom meeting with the President and the Dean of the Faculty.

## **Additional Documents**

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The team found that the Assurance Argument provided links to a comprehensive set of sources as evidence for descriptions and statements in the Argument itself. Ultimately, the team did request six additional documents from the College, which were uploaded into the Addendum Section of the online system. Those documents are:

- A2\_DEANS\_Departmental\_Assessment\_an\_Update.pdf
- 3C\_DEAN\_Comprehensive\_List\_of\_Faculty\_and\_Teaching\_Staff\_with\_Credentials\_and\_Courses-Taught\_2021-2022.pdf
- 3D\_DEANS\_Update\_on\_Discussion-and\_Analyses\_New\_Science\_Building.pdf
- 5B\_DEANS\_Update\_on\_College\_Policy\_and\_Practice\_Regarding\_Faculty\_Qualifications.pdf
- 5B\_DEANS\_Update\_on\_Current\_Leadership\_Structure.pdf
- 5C\_DEANS\_Update\_on\_Project\_2024.pdf

## 1 - Mission

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### 1.A - Core Component 1.A

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The institution's mission is articulated publicly and operationalized throughout the institution.

1. The mission was developed through a process suited to the context of the institution.
2. The mission and related statements are current and reference the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission and related statements identify the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education offerings and services the institution provides.
4. The institution's academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
5. The institution clearly articulates its mission through public information, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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#### 1.A.1

Colorado College was founded in 1874 as an institution that would “provide the finest liberal arts education in the country.” The institution's unique location also factors into missional identity in that it seeks to “[draw] upon the adventurous spirit of the Rocky Mountain West.” CC has a long and strong commitment to its mission involving multiple stakeholders within the institution and beyond. Much of this work was driven by presidents of the college: a 2002 initiative culminated in Vision 2010. A new president instituted a fresh “listening tour” in 2011 after which a new strategic plan (“Building on the Block”) emerged that was affirmed by the Board of Trustees in 2012. This plan was revised in 2017 (“Building on the Block 2.0”). In 2021 the current president continued this tradition with a campus climate study with an overall response rate from faculty and staff of 70%. While it is unclear what the results of the survey were, they helped inform Project 2024 which involves a robust conversation with internal and external stakeholders designed to leverage CC's strengths in light of the challenging realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education and to serve as a basis for future strategic planning.

#### 1.A.2

Colorado College's missional documents clearly articulate an unwavering commitment to undergraduate education in a competitive context through which students participate in a unique

learning environment: eight three-and-a-half week “blocks” in the course of an academic year during each of which students take a single, intensive course. Students also are encouraged to participate in community-related engagement opportunities with approximately 20% of the student body doing so annually. CC also has limited its graduate programming focus to a single offering: the Masters of Arts in Teaching.

### 1.A.3

Colorado College’s missional documents note that it seeks to “challenge students, one course at a time, to develop those habits of intellect and imagination that will prepare them for learning and leadership throughout their lives.” This aspiration is born out in published documents such as Building on the Block 2.0, Project 2024, the college website, Admissions Viewbook, and Academic Catalog. These documents also identify the community as a key partner in delivery of the institutional mission (e.g. the Collaborative for Community Engagement and the CC/Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center alliance to jointly support programming).

### 1.A.4

The institution’s academic offerings, student support services and enrollment profile are most definitely consistent with its CC’s stated mission. CC offers 42 undergraduate majors, 28 disciplinary minors, and 28 thematic minors that can be selected from across the liberal arts. This is further evidenced on departmental webpages within the overall institutional website. In 2020 CC’s institutional hallmark, the Block Plan, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is a testament to CC’s commitment to their intentional liberal arts programming in a close-knit teaching and learning environment (student-to-faculty ratio of 10:1). CC also publishes a comprehensive listing of “CC Facts” as part of the Institutional Effectiveness webpages. This compilation of important data underscores the commitment of CC to its mission. This is not limited to academic programming. CC has a truly robust set of support services that facilitate mission in light of students being served. Such complimentary programming includes: the Colket Center for Academic Excellence (offering services in writing, quantitative reasoning, cultural and linguistic diversity, and thesis support) serving as much as 80% of the student body. Other support services include the follow: a comprehensive advising system, accessibility resources, a Student Health and Wellbeing (Student Health Center with programming such as counseling, sexual assault response, wellness, spiritual and religious life), a robust Student Government Association, Competitive Communication (Speech/Debate and Model UN), and an array of mission-related opportunities for students through Residential Experience programming.

### 1.A.5.

The mission and its pursuit by Colorado College is accurately and consistently reflected in multiple publications including the CC website, Admissions Viewbook, Academic Catalog (webpages detailing the Catalog of Courses and another dedicated to the Curriculum), and the college constituent magazine, The Bulletin.

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.B - Core Component 1.B

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The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its external constituencies and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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#### 1.B.1

Colorado College is firmly committed to serving the greater public with its educational offerings and opportunities. This is evident through partnerships such as the Collaborative for Community Engagement (CCE). Founded in 2010, the CCE exists to “co-create community-engaged learning experiences to develop students into engaged citizens who invest their liberal arts education in the public good.” In addition, in 2016 CC entered into partnership with the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center that “signal[ed] the re-envisioning and redefining of both organizations’ contributions to the arts in the region.” This four-year transition by the two institutions (merging with a new name: Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College) was scheduled for completion by July 1, 2020. The CC website provides a robust web presence for the new entity, complete with an excellent listing of events and activities.

The team noted that CC aims to promote its activities and opportunities, including as evidence a pdf of a screen capture of such a calendar. At the time of the review, however, the team was unable to access that calendar using the link provided. Other pages, such as the Academic Calendar, and that for Alumni & Family Events did work successfully. After conversation with the Dean of the Faculty, that problem has now been corrected, apparently having been caused by the recent web maintenance/migration process. The calendar link now operates effectively.

Finally, the Assurance Argument notes that its “Liberal Arts in Correctional Facilities” initiative is now entering its sixth year following a three-year, \$60,000 seed grant from Denver’s PB and K Family Foundation in 2019.” However, the CC website implies that this is no longer active or substantially modified, now subsumed in a Criminal Justice Coalition which is “an issue-based organization designed to raise awareness around the realities of incarcerated individuals and the prison systems they are placed in.”

"In the past, this coalition has worked directly with Colorado College faculty that support the “Liberal Arts in Correctional Facilities” Initiative ....”

“the primary purpose of the coalition is to connect interested Colorado College students to possible engagement work with student-led groups or with local communities [sic] partners who focus on issue areas surrounding criminal justice.”

<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/issue-areas/criminal-justice.html>

Despite inconsistencies throughout the website, it is clear that Colorado College leverages its educational role for the public.

#### 1.B.2.

CC has a demonstrated commitment to ensuring that its financial resources privilege educational operations. This is done through a rigorous adherence to endowment-related spending, limiting annual draws to 5% of earnings based on a twelve quarter rolling average. In addition, CC asserts that the Board of Trustees evaluates and oversees the college budget. Evidence provided was from 2012 and 2016 (outside the current Assurance Argument timeframe). Further, CC contends that “two out of every three dollars of budgeted expenditures are devoted to the categories of instruction, academic support, and student services.” No evidence was provided to support this claim within this Core Component response. Such evidence can be found in Criterion 5, and Core Component 5B in particular. There the college makes a clear argument that speaks to this Core Component.

#### 1.B.3.

Colorado College has a remarkable record of engagement with external constituencies which demonstrate a responsiveness to their needs in light of institutional mission. The Office of Alumni and Family Relations hosts an array of activities that speak to a wide spectrum of constituent interests and needs (e.g. Homecoming, regional alumni chapter activities, career networking events, and robust social media). In addition, CC has a very active YouTube channel and a National Public Radio affiliate public radio station that reaches 20,000 square miles and some 75,000 listeners. As noted earlier in this Criterion, CC also has a magazine, The Bulletin, that intentionally reaches alumni and family.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 1.C - Core Component 1.C

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The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1. The institution encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship and workplace success.
2. The institution's processes and activities demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations.
3. The institution fosters a climate of respect among all students, faculty, staff and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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#### 1.C.1.

Colorado College actively encourages curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students. The Collaborative for Community Engagement (CCE) is the administrative hub for such programming. Serving roughly 10% of the student body annually, the CCE supports cohort-based options for civic learning with students serving directly in community agencies and partnerships; in 2019-2020, this included 65 campus-community partnerships and 137 community organizations. COVID-19 interrupted this campus-community engagement. CC also promotes a High Impact Partnerships initiative which "aims to develop a small consortium of around ten community-based organizations with whom CC can develop deep, multi-faceted institutional partnerships."

(<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/about-us/strategic-plan/tenet-5.html>). Unfortunately, the dedicated url for this project results in a "404 - Page not found" error

(<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/resources-and-support/pathways-to-a-deeper-partnership/high-impact-partner.html>). Once this problem was identified by the team, CC is in the process of making changes to ensure that the link will work. This was apparently a result of the recent revision of the College website in which this specific folder was migrated to an inappropriate content management folder. There is no reason to think that this will be a recurring issue. The CCE webpage does contain much information for those seeking to learn about engagement opportunities, including an overview, areas of issue-based programming, regional information, and a rich listing of resources (along with funding opportunities).

#### 1.C.2.

A commitment to diversity thoroughly permeates Colorado College. This is especially evident in the college's Antiracism Implementation plan created in 2019. Five new full-time staff were hired to help with the implementation of this plan. Since its creation, all three primary institutional communications clearly articulate this commitment to diversity. One such document is the Faculty Handbook ([https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/dean-faculty/documents/faculty\\_handbook\\_ay\\_2021-22.pdf](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/dean-faculty/documents/faculty_handbook_ay_2021-22.pdf)). It might be noted here that this link did not work at the time of the review because the Board of Trustees



had very recently (June, 2022) approved an updated version of the Faculty Handbook which was posted to the website only after the team review. Hence, that document, and the link thereto, is now current and operative. A second such source is the Staff Handbook and the third is The Pathfinder (Student Life Handbook).

The Butler Center is the administrative hub for facilitating the climate of respect across campus. The Center's web presence is rich, offering a comprehensive overview of programming, resources, and staff listing/contacts. CC gives evidence of its commitment to diversity in the student body and faculty/staff profiles: 26% of students identify as underrepresented, compared to 32% of faculty and 26% of staff. CC is intentional in its recruiting and hiring practices, seeking to maintain a faculty/staff employee base that is in keeping with the ethnic profile of the student body.

### 1.C.3.

Colorado College takes seriously the need to cultivate a teaching and learning environment that values diversity of backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives. This commitment includes the work of the Butler Center noted in 1.C.2 as well as dedicated programming by the Office of Human Resources such as the Fierce Conversations project, the Coping with Racial Trauma section of the HR webpages, and promoting the Colorado Equal Pay for Equal Work act also on the HR website. In addition, CC's Crown Faculty Center hosts an "equity and power course for the general education program" as well as multiple resources for faculty including early career faculty development and a "Professional Development Series on Antiracism."

## **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary**

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### **Rationale**

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Founded in 1874, Colorado College is an institution seeking to “provide the finest liberal arts education in the country,” incorporating the unique programming opportunities of the Rocky Mountain West. CC has a firm commitment to maintaining and clearly communicating its institutional mission through multi-stakeholder engagement. Educational programming and services are consistent with CC's mission. CC actively engages and enriches the public through programming and partnerships with the goal of preparing students for success as citizens and future employees. Finally, CC actively seeks to model and promote diversity among students, faculty, and staff, leveraging these various backgrounds to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

## 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### 2.A - Core Component 2.A

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The institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

1. The institution develops and the governing board adopts the mission.
2. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, human resources and auxiliary functions.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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2.A.1. Subcomponent 1.A.1. describes the historical development and implementation of Colorado College's mission as an embodiment of its values, ideals and identity. The Board has been actively engaged in that process. The mission, vision and core values of Colorado College were affirmed by the Trustees in 2015 and the community's continuing commitment to these defining aspects of the institution is reflected on the college website. The By-Laws were amended and re-stated by the Board in 2021.

2.A.2. Colorado College's dedication to the value of integrity begins with the expectations of the Board of Trustees, as set forth in its 2014 public statement on Responsibilities and Expectations. Board members agree to abide by specific standards of ethics which were reviewed and revised in February 2021 to incorporate the addition of the Fine Arts Center Museum. To ensure fiscal integrity of the institution, an annual external audit is conducted and reviewed by the Audit Committee of the Board and made available on the college website.

Transparency of college operations supports integrity and is facilitated by governance structures and processes that complement the oversight of the Board. This includes a Staff Council (the Staff Manual having been amended in May, 2021). The relationship of faculty to the institution is defined in the Faculty Handbook, which was updated in May, 2022 and approved by the Board on June 10, 2022. Likewise the relationship of students to the campus community is framed by a document on "Community Standards and Conduct," which was updated in 2019-2020 and may be found on the website.

During the pandemic, Colorado College has operated with integrity and faithfulness to the spirit of its community policies and practices. The Institutional Report on COVID-19 Response notes changes required by shifting to remote learning (e.g. residential housing policies, attendance), but students, faculty and staff (as well as Board members) were always fully informed (e.g. using e-mail and the

website) about any changes.

All of these processes and resulting documents represent the framework for the college to operate with the integrity that it articulates and embraces in its core values.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.B - Core Component 2.B

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The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public.

1. The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
2. The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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2.B.1. Colorado College's website is considered the primary information locus for all stakeholders. As such, the website provides up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information about all credit-bearing course offerings, pre-requisites, and faculty (organized according to departments and/or programs as well as being linked to the college catalog). It might be noted that there is no easily-accessible faculty list that provides faculty credentials or experience.

The college website is a rich source of information about the application process, financial aid, tuition and fees, the net price calculator, governance structure, accreditation, campus and co-curricular life, campus resources, as well as current issues (e.g. COVID-19 or the college's Anti-Racism Implementation Plan).

2.B.2. While the range of academic offerings, as documented in the Assurance Argument with regard to Criterion 3, represents an aspect of Colorado College that supports its mission, there is also ample evidence of experiences that more holistically complement these academic programs in enacting that mission and the core values of the institution. Examples of those broader opportunities for co-curricular learning are detailed in the Assurance Argument, with appropriate links to documents. These include student research opportunities (with the chance to publicly present that research) and opportunities for community engagement (e.g. the Collaborative for Community Engagement, the Public Interest Fellowship Program, and the Quad Innovation Alliance), as well as a variety of study abroad or domestic field study options. As described in the Assurance Argument (5.C.6), the Office of Student Life also provides a Residential Curriculum to promote intentional learning beyond the classroom.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.C - Core Component 2.C

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The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.
5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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2.C.1. The Assurance Argument states, supported by links to official college documents, that new Board members participate in an orientation process, are assigned a trustee mentor, and are provided with and sign a statement of responsibilities and expectations. The Board, meeting three times annually, is organized into six standing committees that work with administrative staff to oversee areas of college operation. Those committees, as well as several strategic project teams, report regularly to the full Board with recommendations for Board action as appropriate (documented in Minutes of the Board). The records of those actions demonstrate that the Board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities as well as supporting fully the mission of Colorado College.

2.C.2. The Minutes of the Board, as well as notations of Board actions throughout the Assurance Argument (e.g. recent approval of revisions in the Faculty Handbook), confirm the Board's role in preserving and enhancing the college.

2.C.3. The Board of Trustees, acting as a whole, through its standing committees, and by participation in strategic project teams, as well as through regular reports from the President and other administrative officers, gains a holistic understanding of the operations of Colorado College in pursuit of its mission and vision. The Assurance Argument provides evidence of the Board's engagement in and knowledge of significant issues for the College (e.g. the recent addition of the Fine Arts Center Museum). The leadership of the Board in Colorado College's commitment to an approach of Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion reflects concern for both internal and external contexts and constituencies.

2.C.4. Members of the Board of Trustees hold themselves to a high standard of ethical responsibility and conduct, as evidenced by the Code of Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy which is affirmed by each trustee through taking an oath upon assuming their role.

2.C.5. The Assurance Argument states that the Bylaws of the College assign responsibility to the Board for appointing a President to oversee everyday operation of the institution. Additionally, those Bylaws also describe the Board's role in designating senior administrative officers to manage specific areas of that college operation. Moreover, the Faculty Handbook (revised and approved by the Board in June, 2022), provides for the hiring of qualified faculty, defines the role of those faculty and assigns faculty oversight of academic programs.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 2.D - Core Component 2.D

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The institution is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression in the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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2.D. The Amended and Restated Bylaws of Colorado College (approved by the Board of Trustees in 2016) affirms the institution's commitment to academic freedom. The Assurance Argument explains that the policies of tenure serve to protect such freedom, identifying as well the expectation of faculty professional integrity in the exercise of that freedom. These policies and ideals are summarized in the Faculty Handbook which identifies them as integral to the mission and identity of Colorado College.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 2.E - Core Component 2.E

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The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, staff and students.

1. Institutions supporting basic and applied research maintain professional standards and provide oversight ensuring regulatory compliance, ethical behavior and fiscal accountability.
2. The institution provides effective support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff and students.
3. The institution provides students guidance in the ethics of research and use of information resources.
4. The institution enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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2.E.1. As noted in the Assurance Argument and demonstrated in a linked document (Policy on Scholarly Misconduct), Colorado College articulates and implements policies and procedures to ensure high standards in the conducting of scholarly work. Moreover, the college also has in place policies and practices to ensure fiscal responsibility in research activities.

2.E.2. The College's website contains a policy statement on Intellectual Property and Copyright, which is administered jointly by the Dean of the Faculty and the Office of Finance and Administration. With regard to ensuring that research is conducted in accordance with established ethical standards, Colorado College has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to review all proposed research projects (except those that are exempted).

2.E.3. As explained in the Assurance Argument, the chair of the IRB not only coordinates review of research proposals, but engages in education of students in relevant academic classes. Another avenue for education of students about ethical research practices is the involvement of librarians in the First-Year Program and with other student research projects. These librarians have developed a set of Learning Outcome rubrics to instruct students and to assess their learning over their four-year experience. The aim of this instruction is not only to guide research, but to learn to navigate scholarly work in light of copyright and other legal requirements. There is also an online research ethics course available for training students in the Summer Collaborative Research Program.

2.E.4. At the heart of the educational mission and ideals of Colorado College is the commitment to academic integrity in the pursuit of truth. A key vehicle for ensuring that students learn and practice that ideal is the Honor System. The Assurance Argument describes the process of educating students about this policy and its implementation, including their personal commitment to its expectations. Likewise, the text explains the administration of the Honor System by students and faculty.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary**

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### **Rationale**

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Colorado College has and, in the Assurance Argument, documents clear and effective policies and procedures for all of its constituent groups to ensure ethical conduct in its institutional functions and personal relationships. This includes Board of Trustees' documents, the Faculty Handbook, the Staff Handbook, and the Community Standards and Conduct statement as well as policies covering intellectual property/copyright, ethical research, and other expected areas. It is evident that Colorado College fully meets the HLC standards articulated in Criterion 2.

## **3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support**

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The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **3.A - Core Component 3.A**

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The rigor of the institution's academic offerings is appropriate to higher education.

1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate and certificate programs.
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).

### **Rating**

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Met

### **Rationale**

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3.A.1. Colorado College offers evidence through documents, their catalog, and the College's website of up-to-date curricula that are appropriate for both the undergraduate programs as well as the 5th Year Master's in Teaching program and the Master of Arts in Teaching-Dyslexia Specialist program. The curriculum is offered on the Block Plan. All degree and major, minor, and thematic minor requirements are well documented and presented clearly. Course descriptions and credit values also are presented in the Catalog. Clear statements regarding the oversight of state teaching licensure from the State of Colorado are included in the Education major and the two associated Master's programs. Several committees oversee the curriculum. The Curriculum Executive Committee (CEC) is a representative committee of faculty with non-voting representatives from the administration and student representatives. It is charged with broad oversight of the curriculum and mission, such as graduation requirements, curricular review, and proposed removals of programs. The Committee on Instruction (CIO) deals with more operational activities regarding the curriculum such as course approvals and proposals for new programs. The General Education Assessment Committee approves courses for the general education requirement and assesses learning outcomes for these requirements. The system of oversight is robust and appears effective.

3.A.2. Documentation is provided in the Evidence File, the Addendum, and the College website regarding learning outcomes. For the undergraduate programs and general education, the learning outcomes are in place and are cogent. Evidence is presented illustrating the ongoing development of department-level learning outcomes which suggests attention to continuous improvement. The learning outcomes for the Masters's programs in Teaching are not as well-articulated or available on the website. It would be beneficial for these to be made available on the web pages for these programs as well as documented in evidence for future Assurance Arguments.

3.A.3. Colorado College operates one campus. The M.A.T. program is authorized to teach courses online but adheres to the same standards and processes as in-person, face-to-face courses. Grading and credit policies are presented in the Catalog and on the webpage of the Registrar and are used consistently across all programs and modes of instruction.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.B - Core Component 3.B

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The institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.

1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings and degree levels of the institution. The institution articulates the purposes, content and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements.
2. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
3. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity and provides students with growth opportunities and lifelong skills to live and work in a multicultural world.
4. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their offerings and the institution's mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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3.B.1. Colorado College General Education program is well developed and was modified in 2019. Students must complete:

- First-Year Foundations comprised of a critical inquiry seminar, a writing seminar, and Critical Learning across the Liberal Arts.
- Courses on Critical Learning across the Liberal Arts comprised of Analysis and Interpretation of Meaning; Creative Process; Formal Reasoning and Logic; Historical Perspectives; Scientific Analysis; and Societies and Human Behavior.
- Courses focusing on Equity & Power
- Critical Engagement through Language (including the writing seminar in First Year Foundations), plus Language Study at the College Level.

A minimum of nine blocks of study is required within the General Education curriculum. The online policy states, "Students may not use a single course to meet more than one Learning Across the Liberal Arts requirement or more than one Equity and Power requirement. They must take and pass all General Education courses with a minimum grade of C- or S, except CC100". Transfer Students do not need to complete the First-Year Experience. While these General Education requirements are somewhat complicated on paper, the logic and content of each area are articulated well in the learning outcomes. The number of blocks required for the degree is ample yet allows adequate space for students to complete majors/minors and other curricular exploration.

3.B.2. The General Education curriculum was revised by the Curriculum Executive Committee and approved by the faculty in 2019. Colorado College takes its mission seriously as a liberal arts college

and has developed a core educational experience that they label a "signature part of our curriculum and critical to supporting the College's antiracism commitment." The program components call upon students to engage in modes of inquiry that will foster and promote the development of critical thinking. The learning outcomes for these required study areas are well articulated in the documents linked to the Assurance Argument.

3.B.3. Colorado College has implemented an Anti-Racism plan with goals to address DEI issues in the curriculum, including pedagogy. Resources, such as the Crown Faculty Center, have developed Inclusive Pedagogy programs, including teaching observations. Experts in the areas of diversity have provided consultation on campus as well. It is clear that the College is taking steps to address anti-racism and DEI issues.

3.B.4. Creative expression is present in the curriculum of Colorado College. It is one of the areas included within the General Education requirements. Several programs, including Studio Art, Creative Writing, and Music, offer a wide variety of courses. Students produce many creative works, as provided in the Evidence File.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.C - Core Component 3.C

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The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution strives to ensure that the overall composition of its faculty and staff reflects human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.
2. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance, assessment of student learning, and establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff.
3. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual and consortial offerings.
4. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
5. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
6. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
7. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising and cocurricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained and supported in their professional development.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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3.C.1. As part of its Anti-racism Plan, in 2020-21, Colorado College initiated a DEI development program for faculty searches to help increase compositional diversity among its faculty. The goals of this program are 1) to foster inclusive and equitable search processes, 2) to increase compositional diversity in all steps of the search process, and 3) to increase the likelihood of hiring excellent candidates who diversify the faculty and the curriculum. A robust faculty hiring manual was developed and presented in the Evidence File. This hiring guide is thorough, well-intentioned, and should be effective in assuring that faculty hiring is informed regarding diversity and the elimination of biased practices. The College should document the effectiveness of this initiative over time and report this in the following assurance review.

3.C.2. Colorado College reports in the Assurance Argument that they employ 237 full-time and 21 part-time faculty (nb. the College website says 167 full-time professors. It is unclear if this discrepancy is due to title, tenure-track vs. non-tenure-track, qualifications, or inconsistent data). The stated faculty-to-student ratio of 10:1 is extremely strong. It affirms Colorado College's vision to provide the best liberal arts education in the country and assure that faculty are available resources to students as instructors (particularly in its block system) and advisors. Tenured and tenure track faculty (starting in the second year) are expected to serve as advisors and to participate on at least one committee (described in the Faculty Handbook). All faculty in departments with a major are also expected to participate in assessing



student learning. The number of faculty seems adequate to support the system in place for teaching and advising and service to the institution.

3.C.3. The assurance argument report that 99% of faculty hold a terminal degree in their field. The requested faculty roster with terminal degrees listed that appears in the Addendum calls into question this number as well as the qualifications of some instructors. *HLC Assumed Practices* notes that qualified faculty "possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established." Upon review of the roster in the addendum, up to 26 persons listed as faculty have a bachelor's degree or less. Most of these faculty have *experience* or other credentials that qualify them for these positions. It is important to include this information (the roster with education and credentials) in a public-facing document and to maintain a consistent method for documenting the qualification of such faculty. For example, there is a recent graduate teaching in the area of Film described in the addendum as a "Department paraprofessional, a recent Colorado College graduate who majored in this area and was hired by the department to provide appropriate support upon or shortly after graduation." A more detailed explanation of this person's credentials to teach at the college level is probably warranted.

3.C.4. The review process for faculty, both tenure-track, and non-tenure-track, is well documented in the Faculty Handbook. For tenure-track faculty, there are a series of reviews that assess benchmarks and provide feedback for continuous improvement. Peer review, student evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service are all considered in the review process. It is also noted that similar methods are used during salary reviews. Personnel Councils, derived from the Faculty Executive Committee and the Dean, are involved in tenure evaluations with the Board of Trustees finalizing the process. The practices and policies endorsed by Colorado College adhere to standard practices in higher education.

3.C.5. Faculty development is well supported at Colorado College. Sabbatical leaves are provided on a cycle, start-up research funds are provided to new faculty, and competitive funding is available for research activities. The Crown Faculty Center offers workshops and other support to faculty for teaching, research, and service. Awards are given out to faculty for outstanding teaching, scholarship, and research. Release time during the academic year outside of the sabbatical is available on a limited basis via proposal.

3.C.6. Due to the block system in place at Colorado College as well as the 10:1 student-faculty ratio, students have unique access to faculty. Faculty are expected to hold time outside of class for student access and advising. Course evaluations explicitly ask students to report on faculty accessibility and these evaluations are used in standard review processes of faculty.

3.C.7. The hiring process for support staff is documented and rigorous. Staff are onboarded through THRIVE@CC to acquaint them with the College and best practices within their areas of service. Staff undergo personnel reviews and are encouraged to undergo professional development using EXCEL@CC. DEI training also is part of staff professional development.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 3.D - Core Component 3.D

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The institution provides support for student learning and resources for effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its offerings and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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3.D.1. Colorado College provides a full suite of student support services. The Colket Center houses offices that provide support services in the areas of writing, quantitative skills, and cultural and linguistic diversity. International students are supported through a Global Scholars program and a Bridge Scholars program provides support for non-traditional and first-generation students. Orientation includes the "Common Read"-students all reading the same monograph-to engage students in critical thinking and discussion as well as introduce them to core community values.

3.D.2. Student support services are in place for students with learning differences in order to make sure learning is accessible for all Colorado College students.

3.D.3. The advising system (The Advising Hub) provides a centralized location for advising resources to assist advisors and students. A module for the self-service Banner program is in place that assists advisors and students with complex degree requirements. Students also are provided with degree audits. An Advising software platform (Stellic) also allows advisors and students to view degree progress and other important information needed to make the best use of advising sessions. Summer courses are offered in two blocks and students are provided a "wild card" that allows them to take a course at no additional cost. In addition, a pre-college program is in place in the summer for high school juniors and seniors.

3.D.4. Colorado College has ample academic and co-curricular facilities. A large library, a new wellness center, robust athletics facilities, and space for concerts and art exhibitions are some examples of facilities in use. In 2019 a task force focused on the need for a new sciences center. The recommendation was for physical learning spaces that enable collaboration, interdisciplinary engagement, resource sharing, and inclusion. In 2022 the Board of Trustees identified this need as one of importance and will consider if a Strategic Project Team will be formed based on 2022-23 priorities.

**Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **3.S - Criterion 3 - Summary**

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The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **Rationale**

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Colorado College has a strong liberal arts curriculum in place supported by a well-planned General Education core curriculum. A wide variety of opportunities exist for students regarding majors and minors. The student-faculty ratio of 10:1 allows students to have access to faculty, maintain effective class sizes and provide a diverse array of courses and strong advising. An array of student support services are in place and assure that students are offered opportunities to succeed in an equitable atmosphere. The College has an Anti-Racism program in place that is embedded within the curriculum and co-curriculum and also addresses DEI issues in a variety of ways. Good opportunities exist for both faculty and staff professional development and support.

## 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### 4.A - Core Component 4.A

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The institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that ensure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It ensures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution ensures that the credentials it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Colorado College met the expectations of Core Component 4A. Colorado College demonstrated the ways in which they meet the requirements set forth by the Commission with evidence for each of the sub-components.

4.A.1. Colorado College's report provides support for the review cycle (4A.1) at the college including the ways in which the reports are used for data-informed decision support.

4.A.2. & 4.A.3. The College demonstrates the ways in which it evaluates the credits that it issues as well as transfer credit. The details are clearly outlined in the policy manuals that the college provides in its Evidence Files and may be found on the website on the Registrar's webpage and the College Catalog. The process includes the general education program as well as programmatic majors.

4.A.4. Oversight of the curriculum is vested in the Curriculum Executive Committee and the Committee on instruction to insure rigor in the academic programs. Qualifications of faculty are

ensured in this process as well as in faculty hiring and review overseen by the Dean of the Faculty.

4.A.5. The college maintains specialized accreditation for certain programs as appropriate. The Assurance Argument highlights the specialized accreditation for the master's level programs for which the college is approved.

4.A.6. The college evaluates the success of its graduates by using the National Student Clearinghouse to see where graduates have ended up in terms of further education. In 2021, a survey of the class of 2016 provided information about continuing education and/or employment as well as their levels of satisfaction and use of skills learned in college. Going forward, it would be helpful to more fully describe how such data is used to guide current decision-making and how it is communicated to wider audiences (e.g. through the website). It could be useful for marketing, recruiting and fund-raising purposes.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.B - Core Component 4.B

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The institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students.

1. The institution has effective processes for assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings.
2. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
3. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty, instructional and other relevant staff members.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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Colorado College has demonstrated its commitment to assessment and meeting Criterion 4B. The college engages in ongoing assessment of student learning and for the achievement of learning goals in academic and co-curricular offerings.

4.B.1. Colorado College outlined a robust assessment cycle that includes academic and co-curricular offerings. The college outlines how the process works for all areas as well as how the units take ownership of their assessment by designing their own projects as well as implementing an intervention if they do not meet the learning goals. The Assurance Argument described their approach to assessment as being guided by the principles of assessment being meaningful and manageable. The College described a 2 year cycle that outlines the steps that departments and units undertake every semester to stay on cycle for the assessment cycle. The College also describes the ways in which they use the assessment data to improve student learning. In its Assurance Argument, the college highlights a process for co-curricular assessment that they put in place following their participation in an HLC academy.

4B.2. The College highlights the use of reflection as part of the closing the loop process for all departments to reflect on what they learned from their assessment cycle as well as a means to determine if they need to engage in an improvement process. The Assurance Argument notes that a similar process is in development for the general education program.

4B.3. Colorado College outlines several principles of best practices that they employ in their assessment practices. The strategies and methodologies outline the inclusion of many campus partners in the assessment process from beginning to end. The College highlights that for general education, faculty on the General Education Committee do the assessment work and that administrators do not participate in the process. It would be helpful to have more details about the ways in which the committee uses this information to close the loop.

### Interim Monitoring (if applicable)

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 4.C - Core Component 4.C

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The institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence and completion that are ambitious, attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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4.C.1. The institution has defined goals that are ambitious, attainable, and appropriate to its mission. Ongoing evaluation of these goals is described in the Assurance Argument as involving use of both historical trends and peer comparison data. Evidence provided to the team by the Dean of the Faculty shows that the Fall 2021 first-to-second-year retention rate for Colorado College was 96.0% which is the second highest rate for the 15-college peer group (the average for which was 93.7%). That evidence further shows that the six-year graduation rate for Colorado College was 88.0%, the lowest rate among the peer group (which averaged 89.7%). In both first-to-second-year retention and six-year graduation rates (although Fall 2020 was atypical due to COVID-19), Colorado College outperformed many of its peers in the demonstrated improvement from Fall 2020 to 2021. Its first-to-second-year retention significantly exceeds its goal of 93.7% (the peer average), while its six-year graduation rate of 88.0% lags only slightly behind the peer average of 89.7%. Hence, there is room for continued improvement, but it is clear that Colorado College has, in fact, set and pursued appropriate goals.

4.C.2. The College discusses clearly in its Assurance Argument the metrics tracked by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to monitor the educational improvement goals related to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs. Colorado College draws upon its own metrics and data, based upon the Common Data Set and IPEDS definitions to examine progress within cohorts and across peer institutions. These data are shared publicly through the website. These data support the College's claim that it is "helping students to thrive and to succeed" at levels comparable to peer schools.

4.C.3. The institution provided evidence of the tracking and measuring of these goals through a dashboard and other studies conducted within the institution and through consortia partnerships (ACM)

and use of the CDS. The Assurance Argument notes the commitment of the College to using data on retention and completion for the purpose of institutional improvement. An example of this is a change in the Student Time-Off Policy to address the situation of students who may not have been fully engaged in College programs.

4.C.4. As stated in the Assurance Argument, the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness utilizes processes and methodologies that allow the institution to look at their own data and data from peers while utilizing good practices.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary**

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### **Rationale**

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Colorado College in its Assurance Argument demonstrates that it has met the requirements set forth in Criterion 4. The College has an effective and sustainable process for reviewing its educational programs both inside the classroom and in its co-curricular learning environments. Myriad campus partners are involved in the monitoring and use of assessment findings, data related to graduate outcomes as well as other metrics of institutional and student success. In the future, more explicit attention to examples of such use of assessment data to close the loop (e.g. with respect to general education) would be beneficial.

## 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning

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The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

### 5.A - Core Component 5.A

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Through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution's leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. Shared governance at the institution engages its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff and students—through planning, policies and procedures.
2. The institution's administration uses data to reach informed decisions in the best interests of the institution and its constituents.
3. The institution's administration ensures that faculty and, when appropriate, staff and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy and processes through effective collaborative structures.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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5A1. Colorado College (CC) provided evidence of the importance of shared governance through the published Shared Governance statement and the Argument narrative. The narrative discussed samples of shared governance actions by the Board of Trustees and by the internal organizational structure of the college. The organizational chart was included as evidence and demonstrated appropriate divisions to ensure oversight of the structures of the college. In 2018 the visiting HLC team suggested an assessment of the newly launched Provost model before the next visit. The Colorado College Dean of the faculty provided a statement that the incoming President had reviewed the Provost model upon her arrival in July, 2021. After seeking input from many sources, the President determined the college would be better served with a different model that included a Dean of the College and Dean of the Faculty and retired the position of Provost. The two new positions are fully described in the Faculty Handbook.

Descriptions and the charge for committees were provided. For example four faculty-elected representatives from the Faculty Executive Committee are appointed to a governance committee which subsequently appoints faculty to other college-wide committees. The committees often include staff and / or student representation furthering the potential for collaborations among the stakeholders. While no minutes were provided showing action by various committees, the committees do appear to be appropriately structured and documented within the primary handbooks of the college.

In addition, a Staff Council represents the interests of staff and students advocate through the Student Governance Association along with several students who serve on key committees of CC, providing

input into decision making particularly with regard to academics and budgeting.

Governance policies include the Amended and Restated Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, President, administrators and students. Handbooks also guide various constituencies including faculty, staff, and students.

5A2. Dashboards are used to communicate data for decision-making with the Board receiving updates three times per year on their 23 dashboards and with the Cabinet receiving two updates on their 55 dashboards (along with the aforementioned dashboards provided to the Board). The narrative notes that faculty salaries and peer institution costs are two key metrics that are monitored and provided a sample. The dashboard contents were included, though we were unable to see screenshots. It was also not clear whether the dashboards were available in real time to Cabinet members or only downloaded and distributed two times per year as noted above.

5A3. Primary responsibility for curricular items rests with the Faculty and the responsibility is written into the Faculty Handbook (PP). Appropriate committees are used to review academic requirements, curricular changes, and the general education program including the Curriculum Executive Committee, the Committee on Instruction, and the General Education Assessment and Review Committee. Again, while no minutes were provided to demonstrate the activity of the groups, the descriptions and composition of the committees were provided and demonstrated a commitment to shared governance at the college.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## 5.B - Core Component 5.B

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The institution's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has qualified and trained operational staff and infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The goals incorporated into the mission and any related statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources and opportunities.
3. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring its finances.
4. The institution's fiscal allocations ensure that its educational purposes are achieved.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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5B1. Colorado benchmarks against 15 selective liberal art institutions to assure tuition, fees, salaries, and expenditures are competitive. The college compares favorably with these institutions when comparing salaries for both faculty and staff. The institution provides in-house and off-campus professional development opportunities for staff as well as tuition assistance for those pursuing additional degrees. The College does vary from its peers in revenue and expenditures, though it is in general a favorable variance. Of note is the low discount rate of 33% offered to students which is possible due to the high demand for enrollment at the college. The college also notes that it spends a higher than average amount on transportation costs attributable to their block plan which allows for greater student travel than other schools and due to the distance its athletic teams must travel for competitions.

While audited financial statements and the CFI were not included with the evidence, the team was able to locate these through the website to evaluate the financial position of the college over the previous few years since the last team visit. These financial statements show that Colorado College has been and remains financially healthy and capable of devoting its resources to the continuing pursuit of its mission.

With the financial statements, a narrative by the the College CFO indicated some disruptions due to COVID-19. Those disruptions included reduced tuition revenue as well as room and meal plan revenue. The college cut expenses and left positions unfilled in order to mitigate the lost revenue, but was able to keep all other employees at the college and end the year with a slight positive balance. The long-term investment fund grew dramatically, primarily due to positive market results during the time period. Net assets also grew despite some growth in liabilities. The financial impact of COVID was also documented in the COVID form filed by the college.

In the most recent financial statements, slightly under 70% of the budget was allocated to instruction, academic support, and student services indicating the primacy of the college's educational mission. It is also noteworthy that during 2020-21 academic year, the college offered its students the ability to enroll

and take 10 of the 12 blocks offered for the price of 8 blocks during the pandemic, essentially allowing the students to take summer courses for no additional tuition. Because the budget for the College is so heavily enrollment-driven, it is encouraging that the enrollment picture remains very strong in every respect.

The Board of Trustees annually reviews physical property reports to prioritize renovation and preventive maintenance work to assure up-to-date academic and student housing buildings. The college provided a comprehensive report as an example of what is reviewed as a part of its evidence. Facility Services have oversight of the campus and the college lists decreasing energy consumption as a strategic goal. IT assures updated information technology for the campus.

While not mentioned in 5B, it was noted in Criterion 3 that the college maintains a low student to faculty ratio of 10:1. The narrative indicates sufficient human resources for the staff, but the number is unknown.

5B2. Colorado College articulates its values and mission in Criterion 1 and provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to attain the goals and mission. Assessment of the all college goals is documented in Criterion 4.

5B3. The budget of Colorado College is prepared through a collaborative effort involving 13 persons including four cabinet-level administrators, five faculty members, two staff members, and two students. The President provides guidance to the committee which meets eight times per semester. Upon completion of the committee work, a recommendation is made to the President who makes a proposal to the Board of Trustees Budget and Finance Committee. A final budget is passed by the full Board of Trustees.

A Campus Compensation Committee composed of faculty and staff recommends changes regarding compensation which may or may not be accepted by the budget committee. Sufficient staff is described within the Finance and Administration area to manage the college finances.

5B4. The narrative and evidence provided affirms that sufficient resources are available to meet the educational purposes of the college. While there was not direct evidence linked to support this statement, a review of the financial statements found on the Colorado College website supports this assertion. Endowment growth reflected the positive market and continued contributions to various funds providing the college with good resources for the future. The audited records showed positive balances each year and a 3.0 CFI in each of the two most recent audits.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*



## 5.C - Core Component 5.C

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The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities, including, as applicable, its comprehensive research enterprise, associated institutes and affiliated centers.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity, including fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue and enrollment.
5. Institutional planning anticipates evolving external factors, such as technology advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, the economy and state support.
6. The institution implements its plans to systematically improve its operations and student outcomes.

### Rating

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Met

### Rationale

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5C1. Colorado College (CC) relies on the Campus Budget Committee to allocate its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities as noted in 5B. The committee composition includes senior administrators, faculty, staff, and students. The committee reviews prior expenditures, follows the President's "charge to the committee" with regard to planning assumptions, and recommends tuition and comprehensive fees. The Argument provided a list of projects approved by the committee and administration over the past several years. The projects were wide-ranging and included building renovations, academic courses both on campus and abroad, hiring of personnel, and investment in professional development for faculty and staff.

The college provided pro-forma budgets indicating good planning processes are in place as well as showing positive cash flow year over year. The college has a detailed master plan as well as a short communication plan. Enrollment projections were also included, indicating a positive financial future.

The status of the current strategic plan was unclear from the narrative and evidence provided, however, additional information was submitted by the Dean of the Faculty. A Project 2024 was initiated by the new President that included questions that are being pursued as part of the new strategic plan. The visioning of Project 2024 began in academic year 2021-2022 and will continue for two years, with implementation slated to begin in 2023-2024. Themes have emerged from Project 2024 that include: (1) integrating learning across blocks, (2) leveraging flexibility of the block format, (3) promoting interdisciplinarity, (4) strengthening learning outside the classroom, (5) connecting to post-graduate life, (6) being guided by shared values of wellness and thriving, antiracism, equity and access, and sustainability and the environment, and (7) supporting and developing institutional effectiveness by transparency and effectiveness in the college's work. It is intended that the visioning and planning phases of the new strategic plan will be completed by the end of the 2022-23 academic year. It will be

important to have year over year measurements of the outcomes of this planning process, including any implementation steps available for the next HLC team.

5C2. The argument provided examples of assessment informing programming (thus budgeting) to meet student learning outcomes such as an event series to meet objectives in the Asian Studies program, supporting coursework to meet an objective in the Religion Department, and utilizing outside reviewers to audit programs and make improvement recommendations. The argument also cited the expectation that Department chairs will allocate faculty resources to assure general education offerings. The narrative noted that CC also received a Mellon Pedagogy Research grant which was used to conduct faculty workshops on pedagogy resulting in instructional delivery improvements.

The Argument also states that CC is trying "a new-criterion-based budget request procedure" to centrally evaluate budget requests based on evidence and the linkage to the college's mission. Once implemented, this process should be assessed to determine if it improves the effectiveness of resource allocation.

5C3. The college has recently evaluated its Block Plan (which will mark its 50th anniversary in 2024) to better understand its effectiveness for students. This was completed in 2017-2018 with support from the Mellon Foundation. The Dean of the Faculty explained that a broader assessment of the entire educational experience and opportunities for student learning is incorporated into the Project 2024 strategic planning process. This process will go through 2022-2023 and include a wide range of stakeholders including students, faculty, trustees and others. No interim data was provided. The college also recently deployed and gathered data through a climate survey in December 2021 with a 70% response rate. No results were provided.

The college uses a full-college conference at the beginning of each traditional semester (August and January) to share information and provide space for conversations. First Mondays are also used to bring together the campus during the first three blocks of both semesters.

5C4. The VP of Enrollment, Dean of the College, and the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness work together to monitor enrollment each block period and to provide monthly reports to other members of the community. Per the Argument, the Board of Trustees utilizes its dashboard benchmarking with 15 peer institutions, along with the Board's Budget and Finance Committee, to gather data when making budgetary decisions. The Argument provided an example of endowment spending policy changes informed by economic data resulting in more predictable cash flow for the college.

Because demand for the college is strong, tuition revenue is more predictable than for many other institutions. The college did intentionally overenroll for the past two years due to uncertainties caused by COVID-19, thereby providing additional revenue. A review of the financial statements showed that despite challenges with the COVID-19 environment, the college still ended with a positive revenue flow.

Colorado College did restructure its endowment payout policies to be more conservative following the economic downturn of 2008-09.

5C5. The college has continued to experience high demand for enrollment and the admission department has focused on BIPOC and international student recruitment to improve diversity on campus. The results of the increased effort were not provided but hopefully will be available by the next review cycle. As noted before, despite COVID-19, the demand for enrollment in the college overall has continued to grow.

The President's Cabinet meets weekly to review matters of the college and holds a retreat two times per year for planning and evaluation.

5C6. Colorado College utilizes outside reviewers for administrative unit reviews and provided many examples of changes/improvements that have been made recently such as:

- Advancement hired a new VP who has successfully led the team in securing many gifts including a capital campaign and a single gift of \$33.5 million. In 2021, a new VP was again hired in this area.
- Communications redesigned major communications.
- Office of the Dean of the Faculty successfully implemented a grant from the Mellon Foundation to study the impact of the block schedule.
- Office of IT has implemented multiple upgrades to stay up-to-date with technology changes.
- Office of Finance and Administration listed examples of how they are working to meet the CC strategic plan to sustain workplace excellence with various reports and metrics, including utilizing an outside vendor to administer a climate survey of employees in 2021.

### **Interim Monitoring (if applicable)**

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*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*

## **5.S - Criterion 5 - Summary**

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The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

### **Rationale**

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The college has provided evidence of planning processes to prepare for long-term growth and sustainability. The next strategic plan is a "work in progress" and will hopefully be finished and deployed in the near future. The development processes for many plans include numerous constituents assuring the stakeholders have a voice in planning processes. Independent audits of financial statements show positive cash flows and a strong CFI. Expenses are heavily skewed to the educational purpose and mission of the college.

## Review Dashboard

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Number	Title	Rating
1	Mission	
1.A	Core Component 1.A	Met
1.B	Core Component 1.B	Met
1.C	Core Component 1.C	Met
1.S	Criterion 1 - Summary	
2	Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	
2.A	Core Component 2.A	Met
2.B	Core Component 2.B	Met
2.C	Core Component 2.C	Met
2.D	Core Component 2.D	Met
2.E	Core Component 2.E	Met
2.S	Criterion 2 - Summary	
3	Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support	
3.A	Core Component 3.A	Met
3.B	Core Component 3.B	Met
3.C	Core Component 3.C	Met
3.D	Core Component 3.D	Met
3.S	Criterion 3 - Summary	
4	Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	
4.A	Core Component 4.A	Met
4.B	Core Component 4.B	Met
4.C	Core Component 4.C	Met
4.S	Criterion 4 - Summary	
5	Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning	
5.A	Core Component 5.A	Met
5.B	Core Component 5.B	Met
5.C	Core Component 5.C	Met
5.S	Criterion 5 - Summary	

## Review Summary

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### Conclusion

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Colorado College has effectively constructed an Assurance Argument for its Year Four Mid-Cycle review that documents and supports its status as an Open Pathway institution. The team finds ample evidence that all five HLC criteria (including all sub-components) are met without concern. As part of this review, the team identified significant institutional attention and progress with respect to a number of specific suggestions for improvement made in the 2018 Comprehensive Review. Those areas of improvement included: progress on diversity (including anti-racism), evaluating the effectiveness of the Block Plan, strengthening onboarding of new community members regarding the Block Plan, improving first-year advising, attention to ethical principles and procedures in the First-Year Experience courses, review and revision of the Critical Perspectives requirement, continuing planning for a new science building, tightening the process of administrative reviews, further development of co-curricular assessment, evaluating the Provost model of administration, extending planning through Project 2024, and more closely linking assessment of student learning to planning and budgeting.

At the same time, the team recognized a number of significant continuities and strengths that characterize Colorado College. A key part of its institutional identity is its reputational status as an institution seeking to “provide the finest liberal arts education in the country,” incorporating the unique programming opportunities of the Rocky Mountain West. Colorado College enjoys success in maintaining and clearly communicating its institutional mission through multi-stakeholder engagement. Its mission is strongly embodied in its educational programming and in the life of the College community. It wholeheartedly embraces its goal of preparing students for future lives as employees and as citizens. Additionally, Colorado College provides a model for an organization promoting diversity while leveraging the diverse backgrounds of its community members to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Colorado College has and, in the Assurance Argument, documents clear and effective policies and procedures for all of its constituent groups to ensure ethical conduct in its institutional functions and personal relationships. It is evident that Colorado College fully meets the HLC standards articulated in Criterion 2.

Colorado College has a strong liberal arts curriculum in place supported by a well-planned General Education core curriculum. Moreover, a wide array of strong academic majors and minors provide a solid foundation for students' pursuit of career paths that speak to their interests and that help equip those students to create a positive future for society and the world. Students educational experience and personal growth is enhanced by a close relationship with faculty (10:1 ratio and intensive interaction in the Block Plan). The College's recent emphasis on Anti-Racism represents one manifestation of its longstanding dedication to engaging with the wider societal context and to equipping its graduates to do that actively.

Colorado College in its Assurance Argument demonstrates that it has met the requirements set forth in Criterion 4. The College has an effective and sustainable process for reviewing its educational programs both inside the classroom and in its co-curricular learning environments.

The college has provided evidence of planning processes to prepare for long-term growth and sustainability. The next strategic plan is a "work in progress" and it is expected to emerge out of the present Project 2024. Consistent with the ideals of the College's mission and vision, there is transparency and broad engagement across the community in the planning process. It is also noteworthy that Colorado College remains financially healthy based, in part, on the careful management of its resources. The evidence shows that the institution has the ability to sustain its mission and its programs into the future.

## **Overall Recommendations**

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### **Criteria For Accreditation**

Met

### **Sanctions Recommendation**

No Sanction

### **Pathways Recommendation**

Not Applicable to This Review

*No Interim Monitoring Recommended.*