

Rhonda M. Epper, Ph.D.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Education Administration, 1996

University of Denver, College of Education

Master of Business Administration, 1991

University of Denver, Daniels College of Business

Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance, 1988

University of Texas at Austin, College of Business Administration

Professional Experience

Trinidad State College

June 2019 - Present

President

Major accomplishments include \$45 million in capital funding and oversight of renovations to our library, cafeteria, performing arts theatre, one residence hall, and the entire Alamosa campus (currently underway); built a legislative coalition for a name change (dropped “Junior”); built a partnership to advance economic development in our region by extending Emergent Campus from Fremont County to Trinidad and the San Luis Valley – including securing grants totaling \$9.25 million for this work; launched the college’s first bachelor’s degrees in Nursing and Business; created new programs in Cybersecurity, Robotics, Computer Aided Drafting and new investment in visual and performing arts; stabilized enrollment after the pandemic; expanded the Prison Education program to all 15 facilities in Colorado; increased college reserves from 30% of operating to 130%; raised our graduation rate from 49.8% to 58.3%, which is the highest in the Colorado Community College System, and as a long-term HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution), we consistently maintain the smallest equity gaps on most measures. In recognition of these successes, we were named a semi-finalist (top 20) for the Aspen Prize in 2025, the hallmark of community college excellence in the nation.

Community College of Denver

July 2015 – May 2019

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Provided academic leadership and oversight for all instructional functions of the College, including the following academic centers: Math and Science, Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences, Career and Technical Education, Performing Arts, and Behavioral and Social Sciences. Oversaw academic support operations, including the Teaching & Learning Center, Faculty Professional Development, Online Learning, Tutoring Excel Centers, and College Pathways (Concurrent Enrollment).

Major initiatives and accomplishments as provost:

- **Reaffirmation of Accreditation:** Higher Learning Commission (HLC) comprehensive site visit in March 2017. Conducted thorough audit of all assumed practices, documenting procedures and practices to ensure compliance.

- **Bachelor of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene:** Sought and received approval from the CCCS board, Colorado Commission on Higher Education, and the Higher Learning Commission. Launched the BAS program, CCD's first bachelor's degree, in fall 2016.
- **Redesign of Developmental Education:** Implemented co-requisite remediation at scale college-wide. In math, success rates rose from 4% of students completing college-level math after five semesters to 54% of students completing college-level math in their *first* semester.
- **Program Alignment:** In addition to the BAS in Dental Hygiene, launched several new programs: AAS in Medical Assisting, AAS in Surgical Technology, AAS in Nutrition, Practical Nursing Certificate (LPN), Radiologic programs in CT, Mammography, and MRI; AAS in Cybersecurity, certificate in Data Analytics, certificate in Construction Building Crafts. Eliminated programs in Radiation Therapy, Journalism, Engineering Graphics, and Business Technology.
- **Business and Community Partnerships:** The CCD Advanced Manufacturing Center, funded by federal and private donors, supported industry training for BNSF Railroad in a dedicated facility for their incumbent worker training. Partnered with Habitat for Humanity, RK Mechanical, the US Mint, Mikron, and numerous small businesses. Nurtured partnerships with Warren Village, Colorado Women's Foundation, Catholic Charities, Mi Casa Resource Center, and Denver Scholarship Foundation.
- **Concurrent Enrollment Partnership with Denver Public Schools:** Led a change from offering a majority of AAA and Dev Ed courses in high schools to offering a majority of college level courses. Overcame significant resistance to this change.
- **Equity Pedagogy:** Received a five-year, \$3 million Title III HSI grant from US Department of Education to focus on building cultural competencies in teaching through course redesign and faculty professional development. Through a Teagle and Gates Foundation grant, partnered with the Center for Urban Education to teach faculty to analyze data patterns on student outcomes in math with a goal of reducing equity gaps.
- **Guided Pathways:** Initiated the college's participation in AACC Pathways 2.0. Laid out five commitments: Every student will: 1) go through an onboarding/orientation; 2) be required to take a First Year Experience Course; 3) declare a program of study by the end of their first semester; 4) take their college level English and math in the first year; and 5) meet with an advisor or faculty mentor at least once per semester. A "prescribed" first semester and semester-by-semester plan was built for each program.

Colorado Department of Higher Education
Chief Student Success & Academic Affairs Officer

May 2014 – January 2016

Responsible for the academic and student affairs division, which developed and implemented policies to advance student success statewide. Managed institutional stakeholder councils, including provosts, student affairs VPs, admissions directors, and the statewide "General Education" transfer council. Initiated and drove a new statewide policy on prior learning

assessment in 2014 and 2015. Managed major grant programs, including COSI and the \$35 million state GEAR UP program – a federally funded program that supports low-income, first-generation middle and high school students. Served as liaison to numerous partner agencies and organizations, including Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Workforce Development Council, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, Daniels Fund and Denver Scholarship Foundation.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Oct 2013 – May 2014
Regional Director, State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

Responsible for implementing the SARA initiative across the WICHE states during the initial start-up period for SARA, an agreement that allows states to recognize other states' regulation and consumer protection for online learning. Worked with institutions, state boards, and legislative committees in 15 states to gain support for state participation.

Colorado Community College System **November 2010 – October 2013**
Assistant Provost

Responsibilities included support of statewide curriculum system, oversight of major grants, and development of academic innovations among the 13 Colorado community colleges.

- Member of the statewide General Education Council, including negotiation of transfer agreements. Liaison to business and industry groups, including state and regional workforce councils.
- Co-author for two statewide TAA-Community College Career Training Grant programs through the U.S. Department of Labor totaling over \$30 million.
- Led a major systemwide reform of developmental education for all 13 colleges.

Colorado Community College System **Feb 2006 - Nov 2010**

- Successfully led CCCOnline through high growth years, from 10,000 students per year to over 40,000 students per year.
- Managed all aspects of CCCOnline including academic oversight, budgeting, personnel, student services, academic technology, instructional design, faculty management (recruitment, professional development, evaluation), and strategic planning.
- Supervised 30 full-time professional/technical staff, 13 academic program chairs, and 400 part-time faculty.
- Responsible for planning, implementing, and supporting the learning management system for the 13 colleges of the Colorado Community College System as well as other centrally provided technologies (e.g., vendor-provided student help desk, plagiarism software).

Community College of Denver July 2001 – Feb 2006

Director, Academic & Online Program Initiatives. Developed and implemented online degree programs in areas including nursing, teacher education, homeland security, and other transfer and career/technical fields. Provided staff support to Vice President of Learning and to the Academic Standards Curriculum Committee. Developed institutional strategic priorities and served on writing committees for the college's HLC AQIP accreditation process.

California State University System**1999 - 2001**

Office of the Chancellor, Founding staff member for systemwide strategic initiative called MERLOT, a national OER initiative that still exists today. www.merlot.org.

State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Denver, Colo. 1993 – 1999

Project Director. Developed and executed policy research in support of statewide governing and coordinating boards across the United States.

Teaching and Consultancies:**The Aspen Institute, Rising Presidents Fellowship 2017-2018****Adjunct Instructor – CCCOnline Fall 2007 – Spring 2014**

Developed, designed, and taught “Introduction to Business” and “Principles of Management” every fall and spring semester.

California State University, Office of the Chancellor January-June 2011

Consultant. Evaluated options for the CSU System to consider for a major systemwide online learning initiative. Worked with Technology Steering Committee made up of CSU system staff and seven university presidents.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation June 2008 – January 2009

Consultant. Conducted a national research study on behalf of Gates for technology-based learning solutions in developmental math.

Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, Georgia Sept. 2004 - 2005

Consultant/Project Coordinator. Evaluation of E-learning at Northwestern State University.

Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo. July 2001 – 2005

Consultant/External Project Evaluator. Evaluation of state reform initiatives in Nevada, Texas and Illinois for \$2.1 million US Dept of Education PT3 (Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology) grant. Goals encourage policy reform for better use of community colleges in teacher preparation.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Sept. 2003 – 2004

Consultant/ WICHE/Ford Policy Fellow. Provide research and policy analysis of improving technology resources within constrained state resources.