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July 29, 2026

Dr. Justin Schwartz
Chancellor
University of Colorado Boulder
17 UCB
914 Broadway Street
Boulder, CO 80309-0017

Dear Chancellor Schwartz:

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission, staff received and reviewed University of Colorado Boulder's interim report on Assessment and Academic Programs. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

No further reports are required.

Upcoming Reviews

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029-30.

For more information on the interim report process, contact HLC at interimreports@hlcommission.org.
Your HLC staff liaison is John Marr.

Thank you,
Higher Learning Commission

cc: Katherine Eggert, Accreditation Liaison Officer
John Marr, HLC Staff Liaison

STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT**DATE:** July 23, 2026**STAFF LIAISON:** John Marr**REVIEWED BY:** Sherilyn W. Poole**INSTITUTION:** University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, CO**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Justin Schwartz, Chancellor**PREVIOUS HLC ACTION AND SOURCES:**

A report on General Education (3.B.) and Assessment of Student Learning (4.B).

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) submitted a monitoring report to respond to the findings and recommendations from the Team which conducted the 2024 Year 4 Assurance Review. The monitoring report was organized into sections to describe the activities and initiatives CU Boulder implemented to address the four areas of focus. The descriptions identified the groups and individuals who participated in the activities and initiatives. The descriptions presented information clearly and included timelines of the initiatives and activities. Links in the monitoring report take the reader to documents which support the activities and initiatives discussed in the monitoring report.

REPORT SUMMARY: The interim report responded to the four areas of focus identified by the Team.

1. Evidence that the recently established general education framework ensures that all undergraduate students, regardless of degree programs, will have comparable opportunities to achieve the stated core student learning outcomes, meeting at least the assumed equivalent to a minimum of 30 credit hours of distributed general education curriculum.
2. How this general education framework responds to the needs of transfer students and students who switch programs or colleges midway through their undergraduate journey.
3. An assessment framework and plan for general education student learning outcomes at an institutional level that assures consistency both in assessment methods and target levels of attainment of outcomes across all majors and colleges.
4. Evidence demonstrates that all undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs have published measurable student learning outcomes available to students, staff, and faculty and that they have begun to implement assessment of these program learning outcomes.

CU Boulder offers 247 active degree programs which are described in the 2026-27 CU Boulder catalog; 10 of these programs “...are exempt from assessment planning” for one of three reasons. These 10 programs may be initiated for under review for discontinuance, have been dormant and are being evaluated for restarting under a reorganized framework, or they are master’s degrees “in passing” awarded only in the circumstance that a PhD student leaves the program before completing the dissertation.” Assessment cycles are in place for 219 programs which include submitting an assessment plan or annual assessment reports. Residential Learning Communities (RCLs) were developed in response to the provost’s charge to “create a new living-learning model... that are accessible to every incoming first-year student.” Living Learning Communities (LLCs) offer theme-based co-curricular activities. Using the outcomes of several strong program assessment plans, a resource document was developed that “...highlights some of these strong

assessment plans.” Institutional structures and processes have been implemented and strengthened “...to support and regularize comprehensive *PLO* assessment.” *PLO* assessment and learning improvement have been integrated into the program review process.

CU Boulder has developed and implemented a Common Curriculum “...as the shared framework for undergraduate education.” An interim faculty governance body was created “...to align Common Curriculum learning outcomes with existing curricular structures; have taken operational implementation steps, including building administrative capacity and transferring oversight into the Office of Undergraduate Education as a permanent administration home...” The Common Curriculum Faculty Working Group includes representatives from all schools offering undergraduate instruction, the University Libraries, nonvoting subject-matter experts from the Office of the Registrar, the Environmental Center and compliance and curricular leadership. The implementation of the Common Curriculum emphasized “transparent governance, broad faculty engagement, and institution-wide coordination to ensure the Common Curriculum reflects CU Boulder’s academic philosophy while remaining operationally sustainable across colleges and schools.” Students begin meeting Common Curriculum requirements in their freshman year.

REPORT ANALYSIS: CU Boulder is commended for implementing effective and efficient activities and initiatives to create student program learning outcomes (Program Learning Outcomes - *PLOs*) for each degree program. *PLOs* are published and are measurable. The CU Boulder 2026-27 Catalog includes *PLOs* for 233 degree programs. Faculty in each degree program created a plan to assess and report students’ achievement meeting the learning outcomes. Faculty members use students’ *PLOs* achievement to revise programs and implement teaching innovations as necessary. Additionally, CU Boulder has “incorporated program-level improvement based on *PLO* assessment into the campus program review process.” The Common Curriculum is CU Boulder’s general education program and will be fully implemented for the 2027 incoming class. Many individuals and groups participated in CU Boulder’s activities and initiatives focused on Program Learning Outcomes and the Common Curriculum including faculty members, the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, the Center for Teaching and Learning, dean of undergraduate education, dean of the Graduate School, provost, CU Boulder chancellor, University of Colorado Board of Regents, and vice chancellor for academic planning and assessment. The variety of groups and individuals participating in creating *PLOs* and the Common Curriculum programs ensured multiple ideas, lively conversations, and strong outcomes.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: CU Boulder’s responses to the four areas of focus demonstrated a comprehensive system to guide Program Learning Outcomes (*PLOs*) development, implementation, and faculty members’ utilizing *PLOs* in classes. The Common Curriculum was developed to guide CU Boulder’s general education program opportunities and offerings. Implementing the Common Curriculum begins with first year students’ courses. CU Boulder formed committees to determine the best ways to meet the goals identified in the areas of focus. CU Boulder has clearly positioned itself to assess the *PLO* requirements and use the findings to make any changes necessary. The Common Curriculum guides CU Boulder’s general education and the results of the Common Curriculum courses’ assessments will guide any necessary changes in the requirements.

In preparation for CU Boulder’s 2029-30 reaffirmation review CU Boulder should include the results of the *PLO* and Common Curriculum assessments as described in the interim report.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 3.B, 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- X Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- _ Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- _ Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on Assessment and Academic Programs.

No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2029-30.