UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION ACCREDITATION 2020
ASSURANCE REVIEW

Draft for Campus Review
September 16, 2019

Criterion 1. Mission

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

1.A. The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides the institution’s operations.

   1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
   2. The institution’s academic programs, student support services and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
   3. The institution’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

1.A.1. CU Boulder’s mission as a flagship state university is established in the state constitution and in law. Article VIII of the Constitution of the State of Colorado establishes “the university at Boulder, Colorado Springs, and Denver” as a state institution of higher education. CU Boulder’s distinct statutory role and mission is to offer graduate as well as undergraduate programs and to focus on research excellence. Colorado law defines CU Boulder as “a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards,” requires CU Boulder to “offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degree programs,” and gives CU Boulder “exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law” (C.R.S. 23-20-201).

Art, Article 1 of the Laws of the University of Colorado Board of Regents (see 2.C.1. and 2.C.2.) states, “The University of Colorado is a public research university with multiple campuses serving Colorado, the nation, and the world through leadership in high-quality education and professional training, public service, advancing research and knowledge, and state-of-the-art health care. Each campus has a distinct role and mission as provided by Colorado law.” The Board of Regents 2017 Strategic Vision Framework recognizes those distinct campus roles and missions, and sets out how measurements, assessments and goals set for the University of Colorado as a whole apply differently to the four campuses.

Board of Regents Policy 1.B. further defines the mission of the University of Colorado as a whole: provide an excellent education for all qualified students; uphold ethical standards and steward the university’s resources responsibly; build an educational community in which diversity is a fundamental value; support innovation and entrepreneurship; and strive to meet the educational and workforce needs of Colorado and its residents. The specific mission of CU Boulder, then, is to bring these actions
into practice through education and through engagement in scholarship, creative work, research and discovery. CU Boulder’s status as one of 34 public universities among the 60 U.S. members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) demonstrates its commitment to its mission of excellence in research and creative work, as well as its commitment to both graduate and undergraduate education.

Bringing CU Boulder’s mission into practice requires guiding principles. To that end, the chancellor established the CU Boulder strategic imperatives:

**Strategic Imperative 1: Shape Tomorrow’s Leaders.** Recruit, retain and graduate students committed to demonstrating honor, integrity, accountability, respect and contributions to the common good; understanding, sharing and engaging diverse perspectives; and developing critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills by fully participating in CU Boulder’s academically rigorous programs and community. Recognize and engage graduates who consistently demonstrate CU Boulder values and apply intellectual curiosity, rigor and collaboration to creatively address complex issues and opportunities.

**Strategic Imperative 2: Be the Top University for Innovation.** Serve as the nexus for innovation by facilitating collaboration among universities, industry, laboratories and communities to elucidate and address complex issues and opportunities.

**Strategic Imperative 3: Positively Impact Humanity.** Broaden and expand research, scholarship and creative work, and articulate the positive societal outcomes they advance. Collaborate to produce graduates who apply their CU experience to make meaningful contributions to society.

The strategic imperatives complement the Colorado Creed, the university’s code of ethics and conduct developed in 2004 by CU Boulder students and publicized through an ongoing student organization and affiliated student groups.

CU Boulder’s statutory mission, the Colorado Creed and the strategic imperatives explicitly underlie CU Boulder’s daily operations and its planning for the future (see 1.B.3.).

1.A.2. CU Boulder fulfills its mission as a comprehensive research university by offering 82 degrees at the bachelor’s level and 153 master's, doctoral and professional degree programs in a full range of liberal arts and professional disciplines—arts, humanities, social sciences, mathematics and the sciences, engineering and applied science, music, business, education, environmental design and law—along with 87 undergraduate minors and 56 undergraduate and 85 graduate and professional certificates. New degree programs are added and existing ones revised to reflect new developments and directions in education and research/creative work. For example, new degrees (BS, MS and PhD) in biomedical engineering have been approved to begin in fall 2020.

In accordance with its mission as a public university serving the state and by Colorado statute, the University of Colorado must enroll at least 55% Colorado residents (C.R.S. 23-1-113.5). International students and students enrolled solely in online courses do not count toward this total, and resident students whose academic merit earns them the designation of Colorado Scholars are double-counted for the purposes of this calculation. As of fall 2018, 58% of CU Boulder students were Colorado residents and 42% nonresidents. International students made up 9% of the student body in fall 2018.

Undergraduate admission is selective. Undergraduate enrollment in 2018 was 28,756 students (16% increase from 2010). Of this number, 58% were Colorado residents and 42% nonresidents. International students made up 6.5% of the undergraduate student body in fall 2018.
In accordance with CU Boulder’s mission of graduate education, graduate enrollment also increased during the current decade, reaching 5,754 in 2018 (12% increase from 2010). CU Boulder is the primary contributor to the University of Colorado’s ranking eighth among U.S. universities in numbers of graduate students in science, engineering and health. The elasticity of enrollment in doctoral programs and funded master’s programs is, of course, limited by funding, as well as by the availability of other necessary resources for graduate student research and creative work (see 5.A.1. and 5.C.4.). Of the graduate students enrolled in fall 2018, 60.5% were Colorado residents and 39.5% nonresidents, demonstrating CU Boulder’s commitment to serving the needs of Colorado residents for graduate education. International students made up 21% of the graduate student body.

Through their academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate students are involved in research and creative work that supports the mission of CU Boulder as a public research university (see 3.B.5.). National and international rankings such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (the Shanghai Ranking) and the U.S. News and World Report graduate programs ranking place the university as a whole, as well as programs across the colleges and schools and in every disciplinary area, in the top tier. In FY 2017–18, the University of Colorado Boulder received a record $511 million in sponsored project award funding, with 2,195 awards. Research and development expenditures in FY 2016–17 ranked CU Boulder No. 48 in the nation, one of only seven universities in the top 50 that do not include a medical school. Areas of particular strength in terms of sponsored funding include aerospace, biosciences, earth and environmental sciences, energy, and fundamental sciences. The recently expanded Research and Innovative Office (RIO) assists CU Boulder faculty, staff and students in continuing the university’s upward trajectory in research, scholarship and creative work.

Support services appropriate to the University of Colorado’s mission to serve a diverse student population come in many forms at CU Boulder. The Division of Student Affairs and other offices provide a wide array of services to support the education, well-being and career preparation of both undergraduate and graduate students, including diverse communities (see 3.D. for more detail). Housing and Dining Services provides many options for dining on campus, and provides housing primarily for first- and second-year students and graduate students, as well as assistance to students in locating off-campus housing. New housing has recently been built to meet student demand (see 5.A.1.). The Office of Financial Aid offers guidance designed for specific student populations as well as the student body as a whole, and staff in the Registrar’s and Bursar’s offices provide student support.

1.A.3. In 2017, CU Boulder launched a set of five interlocking, large-scale strategic initiatives to re-envision the university’s educational goals and to set planning and budgeting priorities in explicit alignment with the university’s mission and with the chancellor’s strategic imperatives (see 1.A.1.). Each strategic initiative has engaged significant numbers of faculty, staff and students; taken together, they represent exceptionally broad input into designing CU Boulder’s future. These strategic initiatives are in various stages of crafting their recommendations, but even as they are proceeding, university leadership and the leads of the initiatives have been working together to map how these efforts intersect and to plan and execute a process by which recommendations are implemented.

Unlike most “strategic plans” in higher education, these five strategic initiatives are not time-specific documents whose priorities and plans are not engaged or revisited until it is time to write a new plan a decade hence. Rather, CU Boulder intends the set of five strategic initiatives as a dynamic, ongoing process that, like the research and scholarship in which we engage, commits to ongoing review, assessment, analysis and reconceptualization. Similarly, the five strategic initiatives are not top-down dicta. Rather, each emerged from grass-roots ideas and discussions involving hundreds of constituents. We freely admit that, when the strategic initiative processes began, there was some concern about how
they might conflict or overlap. As the process has continued, however, we have discovered shared goals, priorities and ideas among all five initiatives, and we have found they are not competing but rather mutually supporting. These five strategic initiatives thus constitute the CU Boulder community’s shared and evolving conception of the university’s aims and path forward.

1. The Academic Futures strategic initiative (begun in 2017) identifies key academic goals for the university and is guiding how we will achieve those goals. More like a small-town urban planning process than a typical academic task force, the Academic Futures process offered department and unit-level discussions; ran facilitated and thematic conversations; welcomed white papers (more than 150 were submitted) and online comments; and featured town halls. The Academic Futures report, submitted in October 2018, summarized CU Boulder’s overarching goal in this way: “The Future of CU Boulder as a Public University: Embracing the Core Mission of Furthering the Public Good.” The report’s recommendations stem from CU Boulder’s foundational values of diversity and inclusive excellence, and of sustaining, supporting and inspiring our community. They address specific actions CU Boulder should consider as it pursues its strategic imperatives of shaping tomorrow’s leaders, being a top university for innovation and positively impacting humanity.

2. The Foundations of Excellence strategic initiative (begun in 2017) was designed to improve the first-year student experience in ways that will support student success. Advised by the Gardner Institute, this comprehensive self-study and improvement planning process represented a partnership among the offices of Enrollment Management, Student Affairs and Undergraduate Education. Over 100 faculty, staff and students from across the university served on committees led by a steering committee. This process led to two further committees working in AY 2018–19 to make more granular recommendations on academic advising and on transitioning the university to implementing the Foundations of Excellence recommendations, and also contributed to a separate committee on facilitating transfer student success. Foundations of Excellence recommendations were explicitly included in the Academic Futures process, as well.

3. The Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics (IDEA) Plan (begun in 2018) is the strategic initiative that serves as the university’s working blueprint for achieving the diversity, equity and inclusive excellence goals that are crucial to CU Boulder’s mission. Nearly 40 faculty, staff and students participated in writing and revising a draft that received feedback through online comments and numerous open town hall sessions. The draft recommendations, which are under review by the provost and the executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer (EVC-COO), are designed to build on a previous three-year inclusive excellence initiative and to work in concert with recommendations from the Academic Futures and Foundations of Excellence initiatives.

4. The Financial Futures strategic initiative (begun in 2018) is designed to ensure that CU Boulder’s resources are in optimal alignment with its public teaching and research mission. It is also discovering and uncovering ways to support the Academic Futures, Foundations of Excellence, and IDEA Plan strategic initiatives that are setting the university’s planning priorities (see 5.A.1., 5.A.2., 5.C.1.). The provost and EVC-COO are employing Financial Futures to move recommendations from those initiatives toward implementation. Town halls and listening sessions continue and have involved several hundred participants who have offered ideas and feedback. About 110 projects had been moved toward implementation by August 2019, and many more are on the way.

5. The Strategic Facilities Visioning strategic initiative (begun in 2018) is proceeding in alignment with the priorities established through the Academic Futures, Foundations of Excellence, and IDEA Plan strategic initiatives to ensure that campus facilities support the university’s mission and to improve the efficiency and resiliency of CU Boulder’s infrastructure well into the future (see 5.A.1.). An initial deep dive phase defined the space and infrastructure needs expressed by groups across the
university, and a subsequent scenario planning phase has drawn on the ideas of more than 150 faculty, staff and student leaders.

In addition to the Financial Futures process, CU Boulder’s regular budgeting process is explicitly connected to the university’s research and teaching mission, both in internal planning and through annual review by the Board of Regents, who ensure that each campus’s initiatives are in line with University of Colorado goals (see 5.D.1. and 5.D.2.).

1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans or institutional priorities.

2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of 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 document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

1.B.1. See 1.A.1. for websites that publish CU Boulder’s state-mandated missions and CU Boulder’s statements of its vision, values and strategic imperatives. The chancellor communicates CU Boulder’s goals and their alignment with the strategic imperatives in the annual State of the Campus address as well as in other speeches, columns and e-communications. CU Boulder leadership and communicators continue to articulate to the university how the aims, conversations and recommendations of the five strategic initiatives (see 1.A.3.) dovetail with each other and are leading to decision-making and results. “Leadership Corner” columns and videos from university leadership communicate CU Boulder plans and priorities to faculty, staff, students and the public, as do emailed, web-based and social media updates from CU Boulder Today. The universitywide Strategic Messaging Alliance ensures that university communication reaches the audiences that it should. Both the Unified Student Experience project to design a new student BuffPortal and the End-to-End Student Engagement Communications pilot, whose results will inform the BuffPortal design, are working to increase technology-aided awareness of the aims, accomplishments and resources of CU Boulder among students and alumni.

1.B.2. and 1.B.3. The documents establishing the mission, values and strategic imperatives of the University of Colorado and CU Boulder are current. Article 1 of the Laws of the Regents, which defines the University of Colorado’s mission as a whole, was reviewed and revised in 2018, and the Colorado statute defining the specific mission of CU Boulder was last amended in 2011 (C.R.S. 23-20-101). CU Boulder updated its vision for achieving its mission in 2016 with the chancellor’s establishment of the CU Boulder strategic imperatives. With the five strategic initiatives underway (1.A.3.), CU Boulder is bringing those strategic imperatives into the current moment, taking into account the most recent developments and changes in needs and opportunities for the university, and planning for the needs and opportunities of the future.

The five strategic initiatives have been deliberate and expansive in their thinking about the nature, scope and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides. The key mission of CU Boulder is to serve the people of Colorado, and university law and policy reinforce
that state identity. As a flagship university and as a graduate research institution, CU Boulder also extends its public mission to the nation and the world.

1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution’s processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

1.C.1. and 1.C.2. Board of Regents policy (see 1.A.1.) states that the mission of the University of Colorado includes (1) building an educational community in which diversity is a fundamental value and (2) striving to meet the educational needs of all of Colorado’s residents. Annually, CU Boulder and the other University of Colorado campuses report to the Board of Regents on diversity, one of the metrics through which the Board of Regents evaluates how each campus is supporting the Strategic Vision Framework of the University of Colorado as a whole.

The IDEA Plan, discussed in 1.A.3. and coordinated by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement (ODECE), demonstrates CU Boulder’s fundamental, universitywide commitment to addressing its role in a multicultural society and the multicultural nature of CU Boulder’s own community of faculty, staff and students. Other signs of this commitment are the many university programs, services and other efforts devoted to improving CU Boulder’s accessibility to and education of a diverse student population, and creating a welcoming climate for students, staff and faculty from diverse populations (see 3.B.4.). A final, important sign is CU Boulder’s academic emphasis on human diversity, both within general education requirements and in the many disciplinary and interdisciplinary academic programs that address human diversity and multicultural societies (see 3.B.4.).

Social climate surveys for both undergraduate and graduate students have been administered since 1994. The most recent social climate surveys in 2014 provided a wealth of data indicating areas of both success and needed improvement for diverse groups (see 4.C.3.). These surveys will be repeated in fall 2020 in the form of an expanded, comprehensive survey on climate and workplace culture that will also include faculty and staff. Improving the inclusive climate for all students is a pillar of the strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs and of a number of initiatives spearheaded by the dean of the Graduate School.

Student success: enrollment, retention and graduation

A number of institution-supported pre-collegiate outreach and engagement programs work to recruit and prepare a diverse population of middle and high school students in Colorado and beyond to apply and succeed at CU Boulder or another postsecondary institution of their choice. Examples include the federally funded CU Upward Bound Program, which supports students from 12 high schools in six tribal communities (Navajo, Ramah Navajo, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, Pine Ridge and Jemez Pueblo), and the Pre-Collegiate Bridge Program, which supports the transition of recent high school graduates into CU Boulder before they arrive as first-year students.

Achieving diversity and equity in admissions and enrollment is an ongoing goal. In the current decade, 2010 to 2018, the undergraduate student body has seen increases in the diversity of students who are U.S. residents (from 17% students from diverse groups to 25%), of students from underrepresented minority groups (from 15% to 17%), and of international students (from 2% to 7%). However, the same years saw a decrease in the percentage of undergraduate students who identify as female, from 47% in
2010 to 45% in 2018. The percentage of first-generation college students remained the same, 17%. The fall 2018 graduate student population was 42% female and 58% male, the same as in 2010; 11% were members of underrepresented minority groups, a significant increase from 7% in 2010; and 21% were international students, an increase from 17% in 2010.

CU Boulder’s tilt toward a male student population is not unusual among peer universities. Current publicly available data from the 34 AAU U.S. public universities show that 10 have student bodies that are more than 50% male in composition. This circumstance at CU Boulder may be influenced by the university’s strong reputation in STEM fields and by the shift in enrollments toward the College of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS), from 13% of the undergraduate student body in 2010 to 18% in 2018. It is thus significant that, in pursuit of the goals of its 2017 strategic vision, CEAS has recently made impressive advances in recruiting a diverse student population. Women were 25% of first-year students in CEAS in 2010, and 43% in 2018. Similarly, CEAS has made important strides in recruiting students who are members of underrepresented minorities, who made up 15% of first-year students in CEAS in 2010 and 19% in 2018.

Equally important as recruitment is the success of students as they pursue their degree goals. Undergraduate student retention and graduation rates have improved significantly for CU Boulder’s diverse student populations in the current decade, as they have for students as a whole. Comparing the cohorts entering as first-year students in 2010 and 2017 shows the difference. For undergraduate students who were members of underrepresented minority groups, first-to-second-year retention improved from 80.4% (2010 cohort) to 85.2% (2017 cohort); for women students, from 85.7% (2010 cohort) to 88.7% (2017 cohort); and for first-generation students, from 78.6% (2010 cohort) to 83.9% (2017 cohort). These improvements closely track the first-to-second-year retention rate for students as a whole, which improved from 83.8% (2010 cohort) to 87.5% (2017 cohort).

These improved retention rates bode well for a future improvement in six-year graduation rates, which have already improved both for students as a whole and for diverse student groups. Taking the same eight-year span for comparison purposes, the percentage of total students in the 2005 entering cohort who graduated in six years was 68.5%, whereas by the 2012 entering cohort, the percentage of students who graduated in six years had increased to 70.7%. For students who were members of underrepresented minority groups, graduation rates for the same cohorts increased from 58.1% (2005 cohort) to 62.1% (2012 cohort); for women students, from 70.6% to 73.8%; for first-generation students, from 58.8% to 61.6%.

CU Boulder is proud of but not content with these improvements in student success. The Foundations of Excellence strategic initiative (see 1.A.3.) considered how to improve students’ experience in their first year at CU Boulder and thus lay better groundwork for student success and graduation. This initiative’s recommendations, many of which addressed diverse populations as well as first-year students generally, led to the recent recommendations of the First-Year Experience Transitions Committee and the Foundations of Excellence Advising Committee that are being reviewed for scope and budget through the Financial Futures strategic initiative process (1.A.3.). The Foundations of Excellence recommendations also informed the work of the Provost’s Advisory Committee on Transfer Student Success, many of whose recommendations have already been funded through the Financial Futures process and are being implemented.

Programs for students

ODECE coordinates many of CU Boulder’s diversity-related programs for students. When students matriculate, they are supported by myriad programs for student success both in universitywide
resources such as in the Student Academic Success Center, and in programs in each college and school that are affiliated through the CU LEAD Alliance. Student support services for particular diverse groups—e.g., military veterans, students with disabilities, international students—are discussed in 3.B.4., 3.D.1. and 3.D.2. Many of the 500+ student groups funded by the CU Boulder Student Government are directed toward specific populations of students (for example, the Multicultural Business Association and the Diverse Musicians Alliance).

Faculty and staff

CU Boulder’s recruitment practices, evaluation procedures and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff focus on diversity and inclusion as contributing to CU Boulder’s strategic imperatives and as essential to CU Boulder’s fulfillment of its mission (see 5.A.4.). Through Diversity and Inclusion Summits held each semester, as well as through workshops on, for example, inclusive leadership and inclusive pedagogy, ODECE supports faculty and staff in improving the climate for inclusive excellence for the entire university community. Workshops and trainings for faculty and staff as well as students are also offered by the Center for Inclusion and Social Change. The results of a 2017 Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey have helped CU Boulder’s leadership understand how its employees do and do not feel connected to the university mission, both among diverse groups and overall.

Faculty and staff diversity unfortunately has not increased in the current decade (2010–18). Rather, flat trends are the norm. For instructional faculty, the gender makeup of the group has remained the same (41% female, 59% male in both 2010 and 2018), as has the percentage who were members of underrepresented minority groups (7.4% in 2010, 7.2% in 2018). Research faculty were 41% women in 2010 and 38% women in 2018, and 4.2% members of underrepresented minority groups in 2010 and 4.7% in 2018. Staff (both classified and university/exempt staff) were 57% women in 2010 and 56% in 2018; staff who were members of underrepresented minority groups were 17% of the total in 2010 and 16% in 2018. In terms of the representation of diverse groups among faculty and staff, then, CU Boulder has work to do to initiate an upward trajectory. At the leadership level, however, real change has taken place. Officers of the university were 20% women and 12% members of underrepresented minority groups in 2010, whereas they were 53% women and 17% members of underrepresented minority groups in 2018.

1.D. The institution’s mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.

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 identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

1.D.1. Through teaching, research, creative work and outreach, CU Boulder serves the public in the state of Colorado, the western United States, the nation and the world, fulfilling its mission as a research university committed to the public good.
Scholarship, creative work and discovery

Research and creative work are part of CU Boulder’s statutory mission; they are also an essential part of the university’s devotion to the public good. Whether or not it has immediate practical application, the increase of human knowledge and the addition to the world of original creative works benefit humankind. So does the transmission of knowledge and artistic craft to future generations in the form of effective teaching. We expect our students to leave CU Boulder fully equipped with the tools, the capacity and—perhaps most important—the desire to be informed, engaged citizens and thoughtful, curious human beings. We also hope they will impart this love of learning as they in turn mentor future generations. When a CU Boulder faculty member publishes a Pulitzer Prize-winning history of North Dakota’s Mandan tribe or invents lasers that pulse so fast they can capture the movements of electrons or receives a major award for dance choreography that intermingles technology, carpentry, science and history, the university celebrates not only their accolades but also their abilities to push research, scholarship and creative achievement past old boundaries toward new horizons.

Both basic and applied research tie CU Boulder to a network of research organizations that serve the public good in a national and international context. CU Boulder’s 12 research institutes—the oldest two, the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics (LASP) and the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR), founded in 1948 and 1951, respectively; the newest, the Renée Crown Wellness Institute, founded in 2019—are renowned for interdisciplinary research in the sciences, social sciences, engineering and education. Together, the research institutes generated almost 56% of CU Boulder’s approximately $511 million in research funding in FY 2017–18. Three research institutes exist in partnership with federal laboratories: JILA, with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST); the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES), with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); and the Renewable and Sustainable Energy Institute (RASEI), with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

While federal agency funding for research at CU Boulder is holding strong, industry, other universities, international partners and philanthropy also continue to be areas for growth. In keeping with a strong track record of collaboration with other institutions, subawards and subcontracts issued with CU Boulder partners in FY 2017–18 again increased over the previous fiscal year. Furthermore, partnerships with federal agencies and industry are not mutually exclusive, just as basic and applied research are not mutually exclusive. For example, the CUbit Quantum Initiative, founded in 2018 as a local triad of CU Boulder, the NIST Quantum Physics Division (a core component of JILA) and Front Range companies, advances fundamental science and builds a strong foundation for novel quantum technologies and their rapid dissemination, application and commercialization.

Economic and workforce contributions

Through its education of students across the spectrum of disciplines at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral levels, CU Boulder supports the Board of Regents’ definition of the University of Colorado’s mission to “strive to meet the educational and workforce needs of Colorado and its citizens.” Proposals for new degrees take workforce needs into account (see 3.A.1. and 3.A.2.). Postgraduation surveys of alumni careers and salaries demonstrate CU Boulder students’ success in the workforce.

CU Boulder’s presence and activities have a robust positive impact on the health of the Colorado economy. A Leeds School of Business 2017 study demonstrated that, in FY 2015–16, CU Boulder had an impact (direct, indirect, induced) on the Colorado economy of $3.85 billion. Part of that economic activity arises directly through CU Boulder’s sponsorship of innovation and entrepreneurship, another component of the University of Colorado mission as defined by the Board of Regents (1.A.1.).
Partners at CU Boulder, formerly the Tech Transfer Office, commercializes research breakthroughs to create economic and social impact. To better align with entrepreneurial strengths and strategy in Boulder, Venture Partners at CU Boulder was decentralized from the University of Colorado System office to CU Boulder in 2016. According to a January 2019 economic impact report covering fiscal years 2013–14 through 2017–18, Venture Partners at CU Boulder recorded:

- $10.1 million in licensing revenue to CU Boulder
- $48.7 million in commercialization-specific grants to CU Boulder
- $151.1 million in inferred sales of CU Boulder technology by licensees
- $593.6 million in capital funding for startup companies that were founded on CU Boulder technology
- $1.2 billion in Colorado economic impact, contributing to approximately 8,500 jobs and $511.5 million in labor income for the state

In April 2019, CU Boulder earned the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) University designation from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). IEP designees demonstrate a significant, sustainable and universitywide commitment to economic engagement through (1) talent and workforce development; (2) innovation, entrepreneurship and technology-based economic development; and (3) place development via public service, outreach and community engagement.

Affordability and financial stewardship

Creating greater public access to a first-class education is an important part of CU Boulder’s mission, and keeping tuition affordable is key to that access. In 2016, the Board of Regents set maximum tuition and mandatory fee increases for incoming University of Colorado first-year and transfer students for the upcoming four fiscal years: 5% for FY 2016–17, 5% for FY 2017–18, 4% for FY 2018–19 and 4% for FY 2019–20. Actual increases as approved by the Board of Regents and the Colorado legislature were smaller than these maximums, however. Tuition increases for fiscal years 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 were 3.97%, 4.82% and 3.61%, respectively, and the increase for FY 2019–20 is 0%.

CU Boulder has also made decisions as a financially independent university to maximize affordability and to maximize transparency around costs, allowing students and their families to plan ahead. CU Boulder is entering the fourth year of its undergraduate tuition and mandatory fee guarantee: the tuition and fee scales applicable to an entering undergraduate student pertain for four years of education, with no increases. In AY 2018–19, CU Boulder eliminated student fees related to particular courses and programs, retaining only mandatory fees.

CU Boulder directs financial aid toward the students who need it most. CU Boulder’s Colorado Promise grants guarantee Pell Grant-eligible students grant funding to pay for the student’s share of tuition and fees, plus work-study employment eligibility. Although Pell-eligible students accounted for 17% of resident undergraduates in FY 2016–17, they received 47% of the grant aid. Total grants to all groups in FY 2016–17 equaled $83.5 million, $6.8 million (8.9%) more than in FY 2016. Student loan debt is relatively low. Of CU Boulder bachelor’s degree recipients in FY 2017–18 who were Colorado residents, about half had student loan debt; among these students, average loan debt was around $24,400, with a median of $22,600. About a quarter of nonresident bachelor’s recipients graduated with student loan debt that year; their average loan debt was $32,100, with a median of $25,000.

By far the largest contribution to CU Boulder’s general fund comes from student tuition. Using those tuition dollars wisely—like the wise use of public funding, sponsored research funds and donor gifts—
helps CU Boulder fulfill the University of Colorado’s mission to “uphold ethical standards and steward the university’s resources responsibly.” See 2.A., 5.A.1. and 5.A.2. for details about CU Boulder’s fiscal standards and practices.

Higher education in Colorado, the West and the nation

Both as part of the University of Colorado system and in its own right as an academically comprehensive research university, CU Boulder is committed to the good of public higher education in Colorado, the western United States and the nation. CU Boulder engages with the Colorado legislature on matters affecting higher education, including advocating to maintain and increase state funding support, and CU Boulder administrators serve on Colorado Department of Higher Education institutional groups. CU Boulder especially works in partnership with four-year public institutions serving rural western Colorado. A successful partnership offering CU Boulder engineering degrees at Colorado Mesa University is now being matched by a similar engineering partnership at Western Colorado University (see 3.A.3.). CU Boulder Chancellor Philip DiStefano serves on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Universities, serves on the NCAA Board of Governors, and chairs the Pac-12 athletic conference’s CEO group, whose recent activities include a landmark initiative to support on-campus mental health services.

1.D.2. As the University of Colorado’s flagship, CU Boulder serves the state of Colorado and is focused solely on the university’s educational responsibilities as defined in its statutory mission (see 1.A.1.) and on wisely using the dollars entrusted to the university by taxpayers and tuition-paying students and families. CU Boulder is not answerable or beholden to any investors, related or parent organization or external interest. CU Boulder is part of the four-campus University of Colorado System, but the chancellor of CU Boulder is responsible for operations, and CU Boulder faculty have the principal role in determining curriculum and other academic matters (see 2.C.4.). While CU Boulder participates in NCAA Division 1 sports as part of the Pac-12 conference, the Athletics Department and its Herbst Academic Center ensure that student-athletes understand that academics come first and are equipped with the tools and support systems for academic success. The overall GPA of CU Boulder student athletes in spring 2019 surpassed 3.0.

1.D.3. CU Boulder serves the public in meaningful ways that bring the community together, provide needed services, and extend the university’s mission of shared learning, scholarship, discovery and creative work.

Many academic programs at CU Boulder serve the community directly as an integral part of their mission and identity. The Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences sponsor low-cost clinics in psychotherapy; attention, behavior and learning; and audiology, speech and language services. The law school maintains no fewer than nine clinics that provide legal counsel to clients on topics ranging from juvenile and family law to water rights to legal matters affecting American Indians. The Leeds School of Business offers tax preparation assistance for low-income community residents. Student teachers in the School of Education’s teacher licensure programs assist their mentor teachers with planning and classroom responsibilities.

CU Boulder has a number of programs offering educational opportunities directly to the public at little or no cost. Through the Senior Auditor program, Colorado residents who are 55 or older may audit courses. Community members ages 18–54 may audit courses through Continuing Education’s Community Auditors program. Continuing Education also offers noncredit professional certificates, free “CU on the Weekend” lectures, and English language and U.S. culture courses for both CU students and
members of the community. Non-degree-seeking students are eligible for scholarships through Continuing Education. Other educational opportunities are offered through the myriad lectures, symposia, panel discussions, concerts, performances and other events offered at CU Boulder, many of them free of charge. The Center of the American West, the Center for Humanities and the Arts, the Byron R. White Center for the Study of American Constitutional Law and the College of Music Faculty Tuesdays series are just a few of the university organizations that sponsor events that are free and open to the public. Many events are available for online streaming for those who cannot attend in person. Founded in 1948, CU Boulder’s Conference on World Affairs attracts a diverse group of experts and engaging panelists from around the world with the goal of inspiring students, faculty, staff, the greater Boulder community and the people of Colorado and the nation to exchange ideas, acquire knowledge and gain new insights. The Conference on World Affairs week each spring features over 200 events and more than 100 speakers and performers, attracting more than 70,000 attendees each year.

A current inventory shows no fewer than 260 programs and services at CU Boulder devoted to outreach and public engagement, extending to every region of the state of Colorado. Just a few examples include education programs offered at Mesa Verde National Park by the CU Boulder Museum of Natural History; the annual Astronomy Day at the Sommers-Bausch Observatory and Fiske Planetarium; the Communities Code project to enhance computing literacy among underrepresented groups; and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival’s “Shakespeare and Violence Prevention” tours in Colorado schools. Programs allied under the CU Engage banner in the School of Education focus on projects that integrate student learning in academic courses with community engagement. The Office for Outreach and Engagement provides resources and services to help faculty and staff as well as nonprofits, K–12 schools, colleges and universities, government agencies, and other community partners develop outreach partnership opportunities. These resources and services include workshops and trainings, network development, assistance with program and proposal design, and access to experts and outreach communications support, as well as grants and seed funding for outreach projects.

CU Boulder faculty, students, staff and alumni demonstrate a spirit of public engagement that extends far beyond the confines of campus or of a particular degree program or job description. Every year, CU Boulder is one of the top universities for graduates who join the Peace Corps (see 4.A.6.). CU Boulder was the founding institution for Engineers Without Borders. The Boulder County Latino History Project, initiated by a team including community Latinx volunteers and a CU Boulder Distinguished Professor emerita, has grown into a statewide project to preserve and communicate Latinx history in Colorado communities. The CU Boulder Natural Hazards Center acts as a clearinghouse for research that will save lives and mitigate damage worldwide. These are just a few examples of how the CU Boulder community takes the university’s mission of serving the public into the world.

1. Summary. In addition to the general mission of the University of Colorado as four campuses serving the state of Colorado and its residents, CU Boulder has a well-defined mission as Colorado’s flagship public university for research and graduate education. To realize its mission in its vision and actions as a university, CU Boulder has articulated the Boulder strategic imperatives: shape tomorrow’s leaders, be the top university for innovation and positively impact humanity. These strategic imperatives underlie the five strategic initiatives through which CU Boulder is currently planning its future. They also underlie CU Boulder’s daily operations, including the efforts of faculty, staff and students to serve a diverse community in the state, the nation and the world through education, research, creative work, outreach and public engagement.