

## Foundations of Excellence® Roles and Purposes Dimension Report

University of Colorado Boulder

2/14/2018

**Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education, both for the individual and society.**

These roles and purposes include knowledge acquisition for personal growth, learning to prepare for future employment, learning to become engaged citizens, and learning to serve the public good. Institutions encourage first-year students to examine systematically their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college/university. Students are exposed to the value of general education as well as to the value of more focused, in-depth study of a field or fields of knowledge (i.e., the major).

### Section 1: Executive Summary

#### Section 2: Roles and Purposes dimension committee

Name	Title	Committee Role
Dustin Moody	Associate Director, Registrar	Committee Member
Adam Norris	Senior Instructor, Applied Math	Committee Member
Bob Pasnau	Professor, Philosophy	Committee Member
Kaitlin Pickrell	Student, Journalism (Junior)	Committee Member
Lisa Severy	Director, Career Services	Committee Member
Kathryn Tisdale	Director of Advising Quality, Arts & Sciences	Committee Chair
Paul Voakes	Professor, Journalism, CMCI	Committee Chair
Glenda Walden	Instructor, Sociology	Committee Member
Susan Youtz	Associate Director, Financial Aid	Committee Member

#### Section 3: Narrative on General Situation and Findings of the Dimension Committee

In an age that finds the fundamental reasons for and merits of pursuing education – and specifically a liberal arts education- beyond high school being questioned, it is more important than ever for institutions of higher education like the University of Colorado Boulder to take intentional and aggressive ownership of the narrative. Students and parents are confronted daily with rhetoric that suggests, as Jeb Bush recently did, that students pursuing degrees in disciplines such as Psychology and Philosophy should “realize, you’re going to be working at Chick-fil-A,” (Mills, 2018).

Not unexpectedly, our committee found that first year students had not widely engaged in thinking about or reflecting upon the roles and purposes of higher education. Those who had been exposed to these concepts suggested that inquiry had been limited almost entirely to the “career” related aspect of the dimension. Others suggested that it was only well into their senior year, as they were facing another big life transition, that they had started to think about how their educations might fit into themes like learning for the good of communities; for informed civic engagement; and for personal growth – that is, how higher education contributes both to a life of meaning and a good life.

Based on a review of the student survey results, today’s first-year students crave more structured ways in which to engage the university as a whole, to make connections with others, and to begin to unpack what they are learning in the context of their overall goals. It is the recommendation of this committee to use this opportunity to build a clear and coordinated message regarding the roles and purposes of higher education in which students can engage from “cradle to cradle.”

## Section 4: Assessment & Rationale

While exposure to the idea of the roles and purposes of higher education is present in some corners of the university, e.g. some Resident Academic Programs, the opportunities are inconsistent, uncoordinated, and not available to all students.

## Section 5: Recommendations for Action

### 8.1 Purposes

Summary: CU Boulder lacks a clear, consistent, coordinated effort by which to communicate to FY students its vision for the following purposes of higher education. Individual offices, faculty, and programs do this in a siloed way and for limited populations. Students who are exposed to these ideas in their first year self-describe as "lucky."

*We recommend:*

a) CU Boulder should craft a Statement of Purposes that defines the roles and purposes of higher education, consistent with the mission, vision and values of the campus. Using the Foundations of Excellence definition as a starting point (knowledge acquisition for personal growth; learning to prepare for future employment; learning for engaged citizenship; learning for serving the public good), the university should consider other purposes to this core set, such as:

- \* Learning to learn, independently, for the rest of one's life;
- \* Learning the value of seeking, discovering and sharing new knowledge through academic research;
- \* Learning to thrive in innovative environments, through creative, critical and independent thinking.

b) The campus should communicate this Statement of Purposes at all levels, in all venues, in a coordinated effort to ensure that the university's faculty and staff know, understand, and carry forward the statement as a bedrock of all university activities. Each academic department and administrative office will be expected to utilize the statement in materials, programming, training, teaching, development, learning outcomes, recruiting, etc. The university stands behind faculty, staff, and students who exemplify these core beliefs.

c) This Statement of Purposes should be included in all marketing, recruiting, and strategic relations materials.

d) Ultimately, this Statement of Purposes should be a set of concise phrases that anyone associated with CU Boulder – but especially graduating students – should be able to recite from memory.

### 8.2 Motivation

Summary: According to the first year focus group we conducted that supported the student survey findings, first year students are underwater with transition and logistics (having to find sophomore-year housing, for example, soon after freshman year begins), and even if they are exposed to these ideas, it's nearly impossible to reflect on them in that first year. This was reinforced by the focus group we conducted with SO, JR, and SR students who suggested that it was only now, as they are beyond the FY, that they are starting to think along these lines. A limited number of venues on campus (e.g. some RAPs, some first-year seminars) provide guidance in exploring students' reasons for being here, but the majority of students seem to lack access to such explorations.

*We recommend:*

- a) CU Boulder should provide all undergraduate students with opportunities to think about the roles and purposes of higher education and to explore their own motivations for pursuing a university degree. These exercises should be held in intentional learning communities. Promising venues include (but are not limited to):

- \* Academic Advising
- \* New Student Welcome
- \* Residential Academic Programs and other Resident Life Programs
- \* First-Year Seminars
- \* Career Services
- \* College-specific first-year core courses
- \* College-specific summer bridge programs
- \* Student Support offices such as the Gender and Sexuality Center, Cultural Unity and Engagement Center, etc.
- \* Peer Organizations

b) Whatever the eventual venues are for this exercise, faculty, staff, and students providing the leadership should be trained to deliver a consistent process for the students' exploration.

c) We urge continued programming of these opportunities beyond the first-year experience. Many students express difficulty in confronting the "bigger issues" during the first year, when they are still trying to manage the learning curve of their new environment.

### 8.3 Rationale

Summary: Individual colleges approach communicating the rationale around required courses, competencies, and prerequisites differently. Our focus groups and studies on Positive Psychology indicate benefits in terms of academic achievement and overall well-being for students who understand what they need to do and why they need to do it.

*We Recommend:*

a) The Office of Undergraduate Education should reiterate to the administrative and advising units of all schools and colleges the importance of communicating – clearly and regularly – not only degree requirements and general education curricula, but also the rationales for these requirements.

### Section 6: Sources of Evidence

Doc #	Title	Author	URL
40	Admitted Fall 2017 Transfer Student Survey	ODA, Institutional Research, Fran Costa	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/f4864-7656/admsummaryreport2017transfer.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/f4864-7656/admsummaryreport2017transfer.pdf</a>
41	Admitted Fall 2017 Freshmen Cohort Survey	ODA, Institutional Research, Fran Costa	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/7278d-7657/admittednewfrosh2017.docx">https://foe.jngi.org/d/7278d-7657/admittednewfrosh2017.docx</a>
42	Course grade distribution, DFW rates, and FCQ ratings	ODA, Institutional Research	<a href="https://www.colorado.edu/fcq/content/file-grade-distribution">https://www.colorado.edu/fcq/content/file-grade-distribution</a>
43	Fall term freshman entry cohort retention and graduation rates	ODA, Institutional Research	<a href="https://www.colorado.edu/oda/file-ug-retention-and-grad-entry-collegeethnicity-excel">https://www.colorado.edu/oda/file-ug-retention-and-grad-entry-collegeethnicity-excel</a>
46	A&S RAP Learning Outcomes.pdf		<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/84f8d-7664/as-rap-learning-outcomes.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/84f8d-7664/as-rap-learning-outcomes.pdf</a>
47	A&S RAP Snapshots.pdf		<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/0aeb4-7665/as-rap-snapshots.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/0aeb4-7665/as-rap-snapshots.pdf</a>
60	Transfer Student Survey Fall 2016	ODA, Institutional Research, Fran Costa	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/2ef97-7736/transferstudentsreport2016final.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/2ef97-7736/transferstudentsreport2016final.pdf</a>

80	Fall 2017 Faculty/Staff Survey Results by Dimensions	FoE and Committees	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/95395-7824/facultystaffdimensionsresults2017.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/95395-7824/facultystaffdimensionsresults2017.pdf</a>
81	Fall 2017 Faculty/Staff Survey Results	FoE and Committees	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/a5b97-7825/facultystaffsurveyresults2017.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/a5b97-7825/facultystaffsurveyresults2017.pdf</a>
82	Fall 2017 Student Survey Results by Dimensions	FoE and Committees	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/633c3-7826/studentdimensionsresults2017.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/633c3-7826/studentdimensionsresults2017.pdf</a>
83	Fall 2017 Student Survey Results	FoE and Committees	<a href="https://foe.jngi.org/d/9a8d7-7827/studenturveyresults2017.pdf">https://foe.jngi.org/d/9a8d7-7827/studenturveyresults2017.pdf</a>
86	The Relationship Between Taking a Writing Course and Academic Success in the Freshman Year	Perry Sailor, University of Colorado Boulder, Planning Budget and Analysis	<a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20170424120500_ucboulder2.pdf">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20170424120500_ucboulder2.pdf</a>