

CCD High School Diploma

Board Packet for New Diploma

Executive Summary

The Community College of Denver seeks to launch its High School Diploma program in January, 2025. This innovative program will fill the need in the community to provide a comprehensive pathway to earning that credential through a combination of prior learning assessment (PLA) and targeted curriculum. The PLA honors the demonstrated competencies of prior high school experience as well as workplace learning and military experience. The curriculum aligns with the legislatively mandated competencies in Civics, Mathematics, Reading & Writing. Overall, students will have the opportunity to complete the requirements of this diploma through individualized plans that accelerate time to completion and puts them on a path toward a high wage, high demand certificate or degree at CCD.

The main drivers for offering a high school diploma through CCD is to meet the economic demands of the city & county of Denver as well the State of Colorado. While only 8%, on average, of the population of the Denver MSA does not have a high school credential, significant gaps exist for underrepresented populations (see charts on page 4). A high school diploma serves as a gatekeeper for individuals moving into the workplace and the economic impact of not having such a credential has become untenable. Not having a high school diploma:

- limits an individual's ability to earn sustainable wages
- limits the pool of qualified workers demanded by 21st century business & industry
- disqualifies individuals from eligibility to receive federal financial aid

Traditionally, the only path to earning a diploma for a student who did not complete the credential in their local high school is to successfully pass the GED exam. The GED exam is administered only on a computer, at approved testing centers. It consists of four (4) content area tests: Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA), Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. A test taker must score a minimum of 145 (out of 200) points in each content area. Colorado has also approved the HiSET exam, which is similar to the GED, but has five (5) content areas tests as well as a pencil/paper option. Even though programs offer support classes to help students successfully pass this exam, they are both high-stake standardized exams and have the same propensity to disadvantage students based on race/ethnicity as other exams such as the ACT, SAT, and Accuplacer¹. In contrast, CCD seeks to create a path for students to earn a high school diploma that aligns with the racial equity strategies already employed by the college that disrupt systemic barriers for students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds.

CCD's High School Diploma program requires successful completion of the following courses or equivalent PLA meeting the competencies of the identified courses below:

Reading & Writing	Mathematics	Civics
ENG 0090: Composition & Reading	MAT 0250: Quantitative Literacy -OR- MAT 0300: Algebraic Literacy	PSC 1050: Current Political Issues (GT-SS1) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US Federal Government• Colorado State & Local Government• Genocide & Holocaust

See attached CCD High School Diploma Checklist for details on all ways students can meet the high school diploma requirement in lieu of the above courses.

¹ Saenz, Victor, et al. "The Impact of Financial Aid on College Success for Students of Color." *Rethinking Equity in Higher Education*, American Council on Education, 2019, pp. 25-40. Available at <https://www.equityinhighered.org>.

Cost-effectiveness Assessment (for Students, CCCS, State)

High school diplomas for students outside the traditional public and private secondary educational sector are limited to adult high schools regulated through the Colorado Department of Education and funded through a very limited stream of adult education and workforce dollars. The high school equivalency diploma (HSE) can also be obtained through successful completion of either the GED or HiSET exam. Preparatory programs for these two exams are also funded through the same limited stream of adult education and workforce dollars. The cost of the GED exam is \$174.00 with and additional \$28.00 for the typical GED Ready Tests available to students for self-guided preparation.

In both cases, Colorado does not adequately fund adult education programming to meet the demand of learners, so programming is inconsistent and based upon limited availability of grant dollars.

CCD's high school diploma program will not only offer the stability of a community college but will also be less expensive for students than current adult education programs. CCD will only charge a flat rate of \$50.00 for students to enter the program. No fees will be charged for any PLA, in alignment with current CCD practice. Colorado resident students requiring any course work through credit-based program will use Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF) dollars similar to concurrent enrollment students at local high schools.

As demonstrated in the attached project budget, CCD will fund two positions to manage the program and will invest recruitment dollars to balance all associated management and teaching expenses. In short, CCD plans on investing in these students so they can earn their high school diploma and continue into our high wage, high demand certificates and degrees.

CCCS will have limited exposure to additional costs associated with this program. Registrars and Institutional Research teams are currently fine tuning how these students will be identified in Banner and how the award will be differentiated from our current certificate and degrees, but it will not require new Information Technology, oversight positions, or additional work once the process is complete. In return, CCCS will have a model program opening a pathway for close to 300,000 Coloradans who currently do not have a high school diploma.

Workforce Demand Assessment

Denver and the State of Colorado face a credential attainment gap for the jobs that are available. As the chart shows below², most new jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher, though there are still job opportunities and growth for associate's degree and certificate earners as well as for those with a high school diploma.

Colorado: Jobs forecast for 2031 by education level			
Education level	2031 Jobs	Share of jobs	Rank by share among states
Less than high school	220,000	7%	29
High school diploma	618,000	20%	50
Some college, no degree	626,000	20%	37
Associate's degree	272,000	9%	41
Bachelor's degree	892,000	28%	2
Graduate degree	443,000	14%	13
Total	3,071,000	100%	

² Carnevale, A. P., Jayasundera, T., & Repnikov, D. (2023). *State employment projections through 2031: Education and job requirements across the United States*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections_2031-State-Report.pdf

The key factor with high school diplomas is that they are gateway credentials for all post-secondary certificates and degrees. The mechanism used as the gatekeeper for federal financial aid is a secondary school exit (high school diploma, GED, or home school or their equivalent). Students who do not hold a high school diploma or have not passed a high school equivalency test (GET, HiSET) do not qualify for federal financial aid. So, CCD's high school diploma program will not only increase the supply of workers needed for jobs requiring a high school diploma, it will also open the gate for those students to pursue more advanced degrees and career skills development.

Student Demand Assessment

According to the 2020 census data³, there are a little over 48,000 adults over the age of 25 in the city & county of Denver who do not have a high school diploma and close to 162,000 adults over the age of 25 in the Denver metro area who do not have a high school diploma.

Educational attainment

90.9%

High school grad or higher

about the same as the rate in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area: 92.4%

about the same as the rate in Colorado: 93%

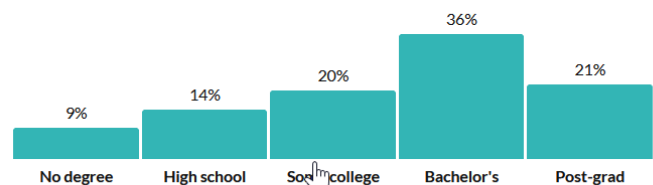
57.1%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about 20 percent higher than the rate in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area: 49.4%

about 25 percent higher than the rate in Colorado: 45.9%

Population by highest level of education



* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Hide data / Embed](#)

Population by highest level of education (Table B15002) [View table](#)

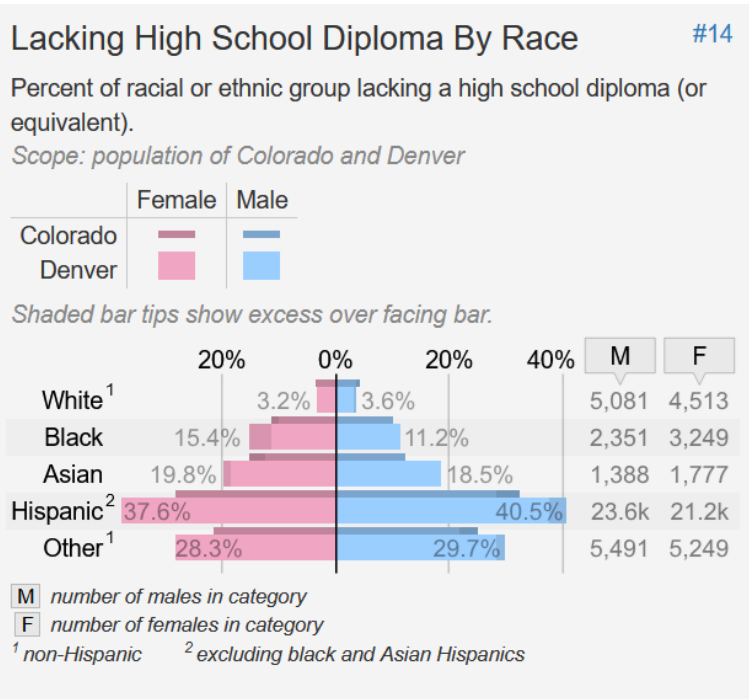
Column	Denver		Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area		Colorado							
No degree	9.1%	±0.8%	48,068	±4,407.7	7.7%	±0.4%	161,861	±7,751.4	7%	±0.3%	284,568	±10,436.3
High school	14.2%	±0.9%	74,421	±4,954.8	18.3%	±0.5%	387,079	±9,469.7	20.2%	±0.3%	823,109	±14,075.3
Some college	19.7%	±1.2%	103,312	±6,193	24.7%	±0.6%	522,131	±12,132.9	27%	±0.4%	1,101,195	±17,437.7
Bachelor's	35.7%	±1.3%	187,626	±6,645.7	31.4%	±0.6%	665,155	±12,039.2	28.8%	±0.4%	1,177,891	±16,276.4
Post-grad	21.4%	±1.1%	112,343	±5,500.1	18%	±0.5%	380,961	±10,409.6	17.1%	±0.3%	697,241	±13,598.6

[Hide data](#)

More significantly, when the same data from the 2010 census was disaggregated by race/ethnicity⁴, it showed that Denver's Hispanic identifying population was significantly over-represented in this population group.

³ Census Reporter. (n.d.). *Denver, CO*. Retrieved August 25, 2024, from <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0820000-denver-co/>

⁴ Statistical Atlas. (n.d.). *Educational attainment in Denver, Colorado*. Retrieved August 25, 2024, from <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Colorado/Denver/Educational-Attainment>



Since CCD is an Hispanic Serving Institution, the equity gap of post-secondary credential attainment for the Hispanic identifying population is paramount. CCD’s high school diploma program will address this gap and offer a direct pathway to livable wages for residents currently trapped in low-wage jobs.

Accreditation and Licensing Requirement Assessment

The high school diploma will be submitted as a new program to the Higher Learning Commission, though they do not have accreditation oversight over high school diplomas. There are no licensing opportunities for students upon completion of the high school diploma in and of itself.

Projected Budget, including estimated revenue and expenses associated with the program

See CCD High School Program Cost Analysis for detailed budget projection. As mentioned previously, the cost of the program will primarily be the salaries of the two full-time positions as well as the cost for instructor. Curriculum development is currently underway for the civics requirement and the English and Math curricula already exist. The total costs for the the first year will be around \$165,000.00. For the second year and subsequent years, it will be around \$250,000.00 per year, depending on the variability of instructional costs associated with the number of participants. The goal is to have 100 participants per term, counting only fall and spring, although the design of the curricular portions of the program are competency-based education, allowing for the greatest flexibility of start and finish times. This means that a summer “term” is also planned but not included in program costs since that will be negligible.

Revenue for the program is based on the \$50.00 program fee, the COF revenue for any credit-based class (Civics, English, and/or Math), and FTE associated revenue of Fee for Service and Gaming Revenue. Beginning in FY26, additional revenue will be realized by CCD High School diploma graduates matriculating to CCD certificate/degree programs. The number for these projections are conservative, based on only 25% of any cohort matriculating into programs and taking an average of nine (9) credits per semester. Overall, the program begins paying for itself in the second year with additional revenue to the college from matriculating students of \$225,000.00 per year. CCD’s goal is 100 students per term, which is what is reflected in the cost analysis.

Projected Facility and Equipment Costs, including estimated licensing and maintenance costs, if applicable

N/A – program will leverage existing infrastructure.

Budget Impact Assessment (of proposed program on existing programs in terms of finances, enrollment, staffing)

The impact of this program is a new pool of potential students in our short-term certificate and degree programs. Even though the high school diploma increases the earning potential of the students by 25%, the more significant impact is the completion of credentials aligned with high-wage, high demand jobs. This means that the college anticipates at least 25% of the students entering the high school program will matriculate into our existing credit-bearing programs, increasing our FTE overall.

Faculty and staffing needs analysis

Faculty need is met from existing personnel in CCD's English, Math, and Political Science programs. The anticipated impact of running additional sections of ENG 0090 and MAT 0250/0300 will be met with existing faculty and adjunct instructors. The civics components of the diploma requirement will be met with existing faculty and adjunct instructors in our Political Science department.

Staffing needs have already been assessed and CCD is hiring a new full-time Director of the High School Program and a new full-time Navigator for the High School Diploma Program.

Additional programing for candidates who require additional adult education at a level lower than 11th grade will be provided through CCD's non-credit adult education program. This program is funded through traditional adult education funding streams including the Adult Education and Literacy Act (AELA). Additional fee-based adult education classes and tutoring sessions are available at cost in the community.

Analysis of student support services, including library resources

Student support services will be provided through the Center for Workforce Initiatives non-credit program for ELL and adult education, as well as by the Excel! Zone tutoring center. For-credit and non-credit learners have access to campus and digital library resources, as well as in-person and virtual digital literacy instruction. Recruitment, advising, and navigation into CCD certificate and degree programs will be provided by the High School Program Navigator.

Program Course list

See CCD High School Diploma Checklist for detailed list of all PLA and courses that meet diploma requirements.

- ENG 0090: Composition & Reading
- MAT 0250: Quantitative Literacy -or- MAT 0300: Algebraic Literacy
- PSC 1050: Current Political Issues (GT-SS1)
 - US Federal Government
 - Colorado State & Local Government
 - Genocide & Holocaust