



Trinidad State College

Report of Activities

February 2025

Rhonda M. Epper, Ph.D., President

Economic Mobility – *Increase relevant offerings that will result in successful learners earning a sustaining wage.*

U.S. Department of Labor Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant

The U.S. Department of Labor announced \$65 million in funding through the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants, with Southern Colorado receiving a transformative \$5.75 million grant. This funding will empower a coalition of colleges, workforce agencies, non-profits, and employers to address critical regional workforce and economic needs by strengthening advanced manufacturing career pathways.

Trinidad State College will serve as the fiscal lead for this collaborative initiative, joined by key partners: Pueblo Community College, Emergent Campus, Fremont Economic Development Corporation, South Central and San Luis Valley BOCES, Colorado Education Initiative, Data Driven Economic Strategies, Colorado Rural Workforce Consortium, SkillsUSA, Upper Arkansas Council of Governments, and a host of employer partners from the manufacturing sector.

Trinidad State College and Pueblo Community College will expand program tracks in areas such as robotics, automation, welding, and construction, aligning workforce training with the demands of emerging industries such as clean and renewable energy, affordable housing, and transportation.

A cornerstone of the initiative is building stronger connections between education and industry. Emergent Campus, a rural business incubator with operations in Florence and Trinidad, will drive business growth in advanced manufacturing while offering students hands-on opportunities through internships and work-based learning programs. Key employer partners include **VeroTouch** (housing), **Innovative Energy** (solar), **Stormant Designs** (engineering), **Barn Owl Precision Agriculture**, and **3 Rocks Engineering**. Emergent Campus has developed a proven model for bringing employers and high-wage jobs to rural communities, generating over 150 local jobs and additional remote work opportunities since 2019.

“We are thrilled to receive this grant, which brings greater strength and visibility to our region,” said Dr. Rhonda Epper, president of Trinidad State College. “This funding will enable a major upgrade to our advanced manufacturing training labs in both Trinidad and Alamosa, ensuring our students are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow.”

Pueblo Community College president Dr. Chato Hazelbaker, echoed this enthusiasm, “PCC is proud to be a partner in this work to build a stronger manufacturing presence in Southern Colorado. The partners in this grant have a track record of working together, delivering strong outcomes for students and businesses.”

The grant funding will be distributed over a four-year period, beginning in March 2025, and continuing through February 2029.

Education for All – *Increase equitable, learner-centered environments that support all learners meeting their goals.*

Athletic Achievements

Four Trojans qualified for the 2025 NJCAA National **Wrestling** Tournament with strong showings at the Region 9 Tournament this past weekend in La Junta. Sebastian Freeman, CJ Morm, Erik Mestas, and Marcel Gordon will all compete in Iowa on March 7th and 8th. TSC moved into first place in the Region 9 **men's basketball** south standings with a 101-97 win over Lamar on **Sophomore Night**. Lateef Patrick had a game high 40points. Amir Reaves added 24 and Kyren Allen pulled down 14 rebounds. **Beach Volleyball** season got underway as the Trojans split with Region 9 opponent Central Wyoming.



Empowered Talent – *Increase our ability to attract, retain, and sustain the highest quality workforce to advance our mission.*

Colorado Community Health Network

Dean of Instruction and Nursing Director, LoriRae Hamilton, presented information about Trinidad State programs at a recent online seminar hosted by the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). Community Health Centers who participated in the online seminar provide a health care home for more than 857,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 63 of the state's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. It is important to share information about our health sciences programs with providers who are hiring as well as for those looking for a quality educational programs.

CSU-Pueblo CHASS SOCO Conference

Trinidad State College **faculty members, Dr. Paul Boone, Terri Herbstritt, Desi Maxwell, Dr. Tom Nordgren, and Ily Reiling** presented at the CSU-Pueblo Southern Colorado Conference for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. The panel discussed faculty's learning experiences in High Impact Practices and Active Learning Institute workshops and how they implemented what they learned into their courses' design, curriculum, assessment, and instruction. The discussion included analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected at Trinidad State.

Trinidad State Staff Alliance

Staff leaders have stepped forward and the TSC Staff Alliance has become active again this year meeting regularly. **Nicia Crosson on the Trinidad Campus and Amaya Atencio on the Valley Campus are leading Staff**

Alliance. They began by setting goals for the Staff Alliance. Two goals identified include focusing on regular, casual get-togethers to celebrate and get to know one another and having an item included in each meeting's agenda for professional development: a lesson to learn or a take-away skill.

Partner of Choice – *Increase capability, trust, and credibility with partners across all sectors to build shared prosperity.*

Lunch – N – Learn Series



Challenging and important topics continue to be discussed and explored in the lunch-in-learn series that attracts both students as well as faculty and staff monthly to its programs held in-person on one campus and Webex to the other. At the first gathering, guest speaker, **Melody Delmar, Director of the Office of the Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives**, shared information to increase awareness regarding missing and murdered indigenous people. Her office, within the Division of Criminal Justice, Department of Public Safety assists families with needed resources and provides affected families information on how to report missing or murdered loved ones.

The second gathering in February was a lecture by **Deni Seymour, Ph.D. known as the Sherlock Holmes of history**; also called the Perry Mason of archaeology. She is an internationally recognized scholar that focuses on indigenous connections with their past and on protohistoric and historic Native American and Spanish colonial and Spanish expeditionary archaeology and ethnohistory. Her recent book, *Coronado, the New Evidence* discusses 16th-century artifacts found during excavations in Arizona and their importance to piecing together the history of Coronado's expedition.

Power of 13 – *Increase shared opportunities to grow enrollment, improve quality, and achieve cost efficiencies through consortial models and collaboration while leveraging each college's unique strengths.*

WHEREAS, Trinidad State College in 1925 was the first community college founded in Colorado, and



WHEREAS, Community College of Aurora in 1983 was the most recent community college founded in Colorado; and

WHEREAS, Pueblo Community College (1933) and Lamar Community College (1937) were founded in the 1930's; and

WHEREAS, Northeastern Junior College and Otero College were both founded in 1941; and

WHEREAS, great growth occurred in the 1960's with the founding of Colorado Northwestern Community College (1962), Arapahoe Community College (1963), Community College of Denver (1967), Front Range Community College and Pikes Peak State College (1968) and Red Rocks Community College (1969); and

WHEREAS, Morgan Community College was founded in 1970; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Community College System, powered by 13 colleges, enriches lives and builds communities as the premier provider of education that is high-value, career-connected, and life-long, and

WHEREAS, you are all invited to share in our celebrations this 100th anniversary year by attending one of our events – Founder's Day on Friday, April 11 in Trinidad, Colorado; Campus Jubilee Luncheon on our Valley Campus on June 27; and the Centennial Legacy Extravaganza weekend in Trinidad August 8-10.

