



## FRCC April 2025 Board Report

Colleen Simpson, Ed.D.

President

### Economic Mobility

#### Student Heading to Harvard for Summer Research

FRCC TRIO student Leah Shipley has been selected for a position in the Harvard & Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics' Solar Physics Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program for the summer of 2025. The program will cover her travel costs to and from Cambridge, MA, and provide a stipend of \$8,000. Once Leah successfully completes the summer program, the university will also cover the full round-trip cost for her to present her work at a research conference of her choosing.



As Leah nears completion of her Associate of Science degree with computer science designation this May, she is considering pursuing a bachelor's degree in meteorology. (She has been accepted into the Bachelor of Science in Meteorology program at Metropolitan State University of Denver). [Read more about Leah's experience at FRCC](#), including how our TRIO program helped her get an internship at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

#### New Century Workforce Scholar

FRCC nursing student Elizabeth Mahoney has been awarded the prestigious national New Century Workforce Pathway Scholarship—she is the only scholar selected from the state of Colorado. She was chosen from a national pool of nearly 2,100 applicants from more than 1,300 college campuses across the US. Only one New Century Workforce Scholar was selected from each state.



Lizzy is passionate about showing up for those within her community and being an advocate for people from all walks of life. Her fierce determination to help others and her love of science has led her to pursue a degree in nursing from FRCC's Larimer campus. Previously, Lizzy worked as a medical assistant at a reproductive health center. During that time, she fell in love with working directly with patients—and she knew that becoming a nurse would allow her to provide the care she wanted. That passion for making a direct difference, coupled with a desire to keep learning, pushed her back to school.

With her graduation quickly approaching in May, Lizzy is excited to hit the ground running and join the work force. She hopes to eventually complete a bachelor's degree in the coming years. As a New Century Scholar, she will receive a \$1,500 scholarship and will be recognized during the Association of Community College Trustees' Leadership Congress, which will be held next October in New Orleans.

## Education for All

### OER Research

Jaren Seid, one of FRCC's outstanding economics faculty members, has been researching the impact of Open Educational Resources on student performance. He and co-author Dr. Niroj Bhattarai—who taught at FRCC for years and is now at CSU—recently submitted their research to the Journal of Economic Education. The two have been invited to present their paper, *Do Open-Educational Resources Impact Student Performance? A Comparative Analysis*, at the fourteenth annual American Economic Association's Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education.

### HSI Update

FRCC's new Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Task Force launched in February with a retreat led by our HSI consultant [Dr. Alejandro Covarrubias](#). Task force members engaged in team-building exercises and established goals. Their committees will examine six key areas and conduct SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses for this initiative on:

- Mission/Vision/Values Statements and Decision-Making Processes
- Data and Assessment
- Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Engagement with the Latinx Community
- Programs and Services for Minoritized Students
- Compositional Representation of Faculty and Staff



By the end of spring semester, the committees will offer FRCC's Cabinet formal recommendations for moving our HSI work forward.

## Empowered Talent

### Faculty Member Named a “News Champion”

English faculty member Aaron Leff has been named a Center for Community News Champion for 2025, recognizing his work with FRCC's *Front Page* student newspaper. The center, which is based at the University of Vermont, encourages news-academic partnerships in which students help report important stories for communities, addressing the crisis facing local news. These partnerships are leading the next generation of courageous journalists, storytellers and civic leaders.

This opportunity will allow Aaron to connect with professional journalists and academics in the field. Each CCN Champion will receive a monetary reward, peer support and coaching throughout the year. We are thrilled that Aaron will have this opportunity to bring what he learns in this program to our journalism students at FRCC.

## Partner of Choice

### **Jobs for the Future: Project ACCESS**

FRCC has been selected as one of [Jobs for the Future's](#) (JFF) 10 *Project Access* schools. The goal of the project is accelerating career connections and employment success strategies. JFF is creating and supporting a cohort of 10 exemplary community and technical colleges that are accelerating innovative programs and effectively connecting learners with paid work-based learning opportunities and quality jobs. Each cohort institution will receive \$300,000 over a two-year period to help them identify, strengthen and scale up existing programs that lead to labor market opportunity for students who face systemic barriers.

JFF officials selected FRCC because they were impressed with the college's "exemplary" programs and believe it will be an excellent fit for this initiative. The college plans to use the funding to scale our apprenticeship programs—expanding into new Industries and new occupations to increase student access. In particular, FRCC will focus on scaling up our programs in:

- Advanced Manufacturing (machining, automotive, maintenance tech, optics, aircraft upholstery, logistics)
- Health Care (dental assisting, medical assisting—podiatry and pediatric, pharmacy technician, sterile processing, surgical technology, veterinary tech)
- Education (early childhood education teacher/aide, paraprofessional/teacher aide)
- IT (computer-aided drafting, cybersecurity)
- And others (arborist, financial services representative, business administrator)

## Power of 13

### **Digital Accessibility: Training with YuJa Panorama**

Creating an inclusive learning environment starts with accessibility, and FRCC is excited that our digital accessibility champions are now offering a hands-on training to help our college community take the next step. Whether FRCC faculty and instructors are new to accessibility or looking to refine their skills, this new training provides practical tools to create a more inclusive digital experience.

The training begins with an introduction to the Accessibility Literacy Framework, a growth mindset tool designed for self-reflection and tracking progress on your personal accessibility journey. Participants then dive into our new YuJa Panorama software, learning how to review course content for accessibility and make meaningful improvements to support all learners.

This is a great example of sharing information and partnering amongst CCCS schools. To plan and develop our accessibility training, FRCC reviewed accessibility information shared by ACC and PPSC. We also presented FRCC's work during a meeting of the CCCS YuJa Panorama implementation group and shared our *Getting Started with YuJa* training outline with RRCC.

## **Behavioral Health Partnership**

In March FRCC's Behavioral Health Program Manager participated in a roundtable discussion about the inaugural year of the Youth Mental Health Corps (YMHC) project. This innovative public-private partnership—the first of its kind in the nation—aims to train, recruit and deploy AmeriCorps members as peer navigators to support middle and high school students in schools and community-based organizations. Colorado was one of just four states selected to implement the YMHC. FRCC began this groundbreaking partnership in the fall of 2024 with Alpine Achiever's Initiative (AAI) to offer non-credit behavioral health coursework to their AmeriCorps members. These peer navigators work closely with students, helping them access mental health services; they also partner with school staff to ensure a seamless connection to clinical resources.

The recent roundtable included perspectives from AmeriCorps members about their experiences with the CCCS coursework, input from the Behavioral Health Administration, and thoughts from FRCC about the ongoing partnership with AAI. The aim was to facilitate mutual learning for organizations already tied to the YMHC—and for and those interested in being a part of its growth. The discussion provided valuable perspectives on the coursework, its relevance to the YMHC program, and specifically on the AAI program in rural Southern Colorado schools.