Higher Education

Administration and Governance

SB14-149 *(Enacted)*
Private Occupational School Standards

HB14-1048 *(Postponed Indefinitely)*
Religious Freedom Higher Education

HB14-1085 *(Enacted)*
Adult Education and Literacy Programs

HB14-1136 *(Enacted)*
Regulation of Continuing Professional Education

HB14-1365 *(Enacted)*
Junior College Officers & Ag Advises CO Mountain Coll

Financial Assistance, Tuition, and Funding

SB14-001 *(Enacted)*
College Affordability Act

SB14-006 *(Postponed Indefinitely)*
Early Childhood Educator Development Scholarship

HB14-1124 *(Postponed Indefinitely)*
In-state Tuition American Indian Tribes Ties to CO

HB14-1255 *(Postponed Indefinitely)*
Negotiate Resident Tuition for Israelis

HB14-1319 *(Enacted)*
Outcomes-based Funding for Higher Education

HB14-1384 *(Enacted)*
Higher Education Tuition Assistance

Higher Education Employees

HB14-1154 *(Postponed Indefinitely)*
Employment of Community College Faculty

HB14-1256 *(Enacted)*
Higher Ed Employment Contracts for Librarians

Postsecondary Access and Degree Completion

SB14-004 *(Enacted)*
Community College Four-year Programs

SB14-114 *(Enacted)*
Student Access to CSU Global Campus

The General Assembly considered a variety of higher education issues during the 2014 legislative session, including measures regarding administration and governance; financial assistance, tuition, and funding; higher education employees; and postsecondary access and degree completion.

Administration and Governance

Governing boards. During the 2014 session, the legislature passed one measure pertaining to college and university governing boards. Under current law, locally elected junior college boards are given 10 days from the date of an election to select their board officers. However, because elections may not be finalized until 17 days later, it may be impossible for junior college boards of trustees to comply with the 10-day requirement. **House Bill 14-1365** allows locally elected junior college boards of trustees 60 days from the date of the election to select their officers. The bill also directs the Attorney General to serve as the legal counsel for Colorado Mountain College (CMC).

Professional education. Under current law, the Division of Private Occupational Schools (DPOS) within the Department of Higher Education (DHE) regulates private occupational schools and programs offered as professional continuing education. During the 2014 session, the legislature enacted two measures pertaining to professional education. **House Bill 14-1136** removes from the regulatory oversight of DPOS those professional education courses that are offered by non-profit organizations and approved by another state professional licensing entity.

To exempt private occupational schools wishing to operate in Colorado from minimum standards established in statute, current law allows DPOS to rely on accreditation by associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. **Senate Bill 14-149** removes the accreditation exemption, thereby requiring all private occupational schools to meet statutory standards regardless of accreditation status.

Adult education and literacy programs. Currently, Colorado is the only state that does not allocate state dollars to adult education programs. **House Bill 14-1085** creates an adult education and literacy grant program in the Colorado Department of Education. The grant program will provide state funding for adult education and literacy programs that participate in workforce development partnerships. These programs provide eligible adults with basic education in literacy and numeracy.

Religious freedom. **House Bill 14-1048**, which was postponed indefinitely, would have required public colleges and universities in Colorado to allow religious student groups greater flexibility in their selection of officers, by exempting these groups from anti-discrimination policies that may exist on college campuses.

Financial Assistance, Tuition, and Funding

Financial assistance. The legislature debated several bills aimed at combating the rising cost of tuition at Colorado's public colleges and universities. **Senate Bill 14-001**, known as the College Affordability Act, caps annual tuition increases for undergraduate resident students at 6 percent. Institutions of higher education agreed to the cap in exchange for a funding increase of $100.16 million in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

In addition to capping tuition rate increases, the General Assembly passed a measure increasing student financial assistance. **House Bill 14-1384** creates the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative, or COSI. It establishes funding and allows the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to award tuition assistance and facilitate third-party support services for resident students. The program seeks to attract investment from nonprofit organizations and other community partners, and to match those contributions with appropriations from the General Fund.

Additionally, the legislature considered but rejected a measure to broaden the financial assistance available to early childhood educators. **Senate Bill 14-006**, which was postponed indefinitely, would have expanded the Early Childhood Educator Development Scholarship Program within the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and authorized an appropriation to fund the program. The bill would have required the State Board of Education (SBE) to award stipends in order to assist persons employed in early childhood education by offsetting the costs associated with obtaining a postsecondary degree or certificate in early childhood education, or in a related field. The eligibility criteria for stipends would have been expanded as well.

In-state tuition. In 2014, the legislature considered two measures allowing greater access to in-state tuition rates. **House Bill 14-1124** would have allowed members of Native American tribes with historical tribes to Colorado to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities, while **House Bill 14-1255** would have required the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to negotiate with public universities in Israel for a reciprocal in-state tuition rate agreement. Both measures were postponed indefinitely.

Funding. During the 2014 session, the General Assembly enacted a major change to the way higher education institutions will be funded in the future. **House Bill 14-1319** changes the way Colorado allocates state funds by rewarding institutions for performance on specific metrics, and by allowing institutional governing boards to negotiate fee-for-service (FFS) contracts with the Department of Higher Education (DHE). Each FFS contract must include funding that based on a combination of institutional role and mission metrics and institutional performance metrics.

The components of institutional role and mission funding must include:

- selectivity of admissions, the number of campuses, the institution's rural or urban location, low student enrollment issues, and research status;
- support service funding for Pell-eligible, first generation, and underserved undergraduate students;
- graduate program funding;
- remediation funding for institutions authorized to offer basic skills courses; and
- up to two additional role and mission factors to be determined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE).

The components of institutional performance funding must be based on the following metrics:

- completion funding for each certificate or degree conferred by an institution, or transfers from community colleges;
- retention funding for students making sufficient academic progress toward completion; and
- up to two additional performance metrics to be determined by the CCHE.

The legislature provided exceptions to these requirements for area vocational schools, local district junior colleges, and institutions offering specialty education programs. Instead, funding for these institutions is tied to the change in the total state appropriation for institutions of higher education from the previous year. Additionally, institutions that experience a financial hardship and potential closure as a result of the new funding method may also receive approval to negotiate FFS contracts as a specialty program.

Higher Education Employees

The legislature considered two bills in 2014 relating to employees of state public institutions of higher education. **House Bill 14-1154**, which was postponed indefinitely, would have required community colleges to consider all employees with teaching responsibilities to be faculty, at a cost to the state of over $82 million.

On a much smaller scale, **House Bill 14-1256**, which was enacted, allows higher education institutions to offer three-year employment contracts to librarians.

Postsecondary Access and Degree Completion

The legislature enacted two measures designed to increase postsecondary access for Colorado's students and improve rates of degree completion. **Senate Bill 14-004** allows community colleges the ability to grant four-year bachelor of applied science degrees in programs approved by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE). These degree programs must be distinguishable from any degree program currently offered by a four-year institution.

In addition to expanding access to four-year degrees for students at community colleges, the legislature also expanded access to Colorado State University's Global Campus (CSU Global), the university's online program. **Senate Bill 14-114** allows CSU-Global to offer comprehensive online degree programs, eliminating the requirement that students have some amount of earned credits to transfer from a traditional degree program. Only first-time resident freshmen students who are 23 years of age or older are permitted to enroll, however. This requirement was added at the request of the community colleges. CSU Global's degree programs must also be distinguishable from what is already offered at the state's four-year colleges and universities.