

# INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Red Rocks Community College

*December 2013*

*Strategic Plan for  
Inclusion & Diversity*

# Introduction

---

**The Strategic Plan for Inclusion and Diversity is the first of its kind for Red Rocks Community College.** It builds on a foundation of the college's core values and affects every member and potential member of the college community. The Plan will serve as a roadmap for RRCC's efforts to grow an institution where every student, faculty member, and staff member is valued and respected for their unique contributions.

**Demographics are changing in the RRCC service area.** As we work to reach out to all those who could benefit from a quality education, we must remain mindful of how we serve our current and potential students. Our college cannot grow without attracting and retaining people from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. We must engage with a multitude of communities. We must create an experience at Red Rocks Community College that is accessible, inclusive, and supportive. Beyond that, we must prepare our students to thrive in a complex global society.

**Our employees are our greatest resource.** In addition to embracing an increasingly diverse student body, we must do our best to ensure that the differences among students are reflected in our faculty and staff. Through our efforts in recruitment and retention, RRCC must strive to make our search and promotion processes equitable. Through training, programming, and learning opportunities in a variety of forms, we will ensure that all employees are supported and that they are interculturally competent.

**The work has already begun.** Through the efforts of so many here at RRCC, we have laid the foundation for our diversity and inclusion initiatives to be successful. This plan would not have been possible without the leadership of RRCC President Michele Haney, the Diversity Council, Human Resources, Dr. Lisa Fowler and the department of Student Services, and the students, faculty, and staff of Red Rocks Community College. These groups and individuals have shown their commitment in the past, and now we will need all of our innovation, talents, and support as we move forward together. Let the journey begin!

## How do we define diversity and inclusion?

When we talk about diversity at Red Rocks Community College, we are talking about the abundance of identities and experiences that we all bring as our whole selves. Our non-discrimination policy includes protected classes, but our respect for diversity goes beyond that. Diversity can include characteristics such as socio-economic status, education, work experiences, veteran status, and the list goes on and on. Simply put, diversity is the presence of members of various cultural, social, or otherwise distinct

**RRCC Non-Discrimination Policy:**  
Red Rocks Community College does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, religion, age, national origin, or ancestry, or any other category protected by applicable law.

groups which reflects the differences between us and contributes to our shared success. Diversity is difference, and our respect for diversity is about embracing and respecting those differences between us. Without diversity in our employment, we would not have the right people coming together to make the best decisions for our students. Diversity in our student body is an indicator that we are providing access to a quality education for all students.

At Red Rocks Community College, our decisions and priorities reflect our values—integrity, collaboration, learning, communication, and inclusiveness. As one of our core values, inclusiveness reflects our desire to create an educational environment where all individuals are valued, respected, and supported for their unique characteristics and contributions to the shared values and mission of the college. Specifically, inclusiveness means that we will:

- Develop procedures and programs that weave diversity throughout the daily work of the college.
- Demonstrate respect for differences among students and within the community in all we do as a college.
- Expect students to share that same respect and communicate that expectation to them often, both in and out of the classroom.
- Develop our students' and our own abilities to recognize and engage with human differences through understanding and inclusion rather than withdrawal and exclusion.

## Our Foundation

The Diversity Council has identified the following mission and vision as the foundation for the initiatives that will be implemented by the Center for Inclusion and Diversity.

### Mission

The Center for Inclusion and Diversity strives to create a climate of inclusion where students, faculty, and staff are supported and empowered in their personal journeys. Through equity in access, developmental opportunities, and holistic education, we will prepare all members of the RRCC community to actively engage in an increasingly diverse and global society.

### Vision

We will value and respect our inherent differences and endeavor to learn from each other. Our educational programs, services, and activities will reflect this commitment to diversity.

### Colorado Community College System Mission:

To provide an accessible, responsive learning environment that facilitates the achievement of educational, professional and personal goals by our students and other members of our communities in an atmosphere that embraces academic excellence, diversity, and innovation

## **Challenges and Strategies**

The Strategic Plan for Inclusion and Diversity for Red Rocks Community College includes five areas of focus, each of which presents its own challenges and strategies to address the needs of the institution.

- ***Campus climate***
- ***Student Recruitment and Retention***
- ***Employee Recruitment and Retention***
- ***Outreach & Partnerships***
- ***Effectiveness and Accountability***

More detail on each of these areas will be provided in the following sections. As we learn and grow in our efforts, tactics and goals may shift, but the root of each area remains the same.

## **CAMPUS CLIMATE**

---

Campus climate is defined as the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members. While this definition focuses on the psychological aspects of campus climate, it is also linked with an institution's structural diversity and interactions both inside and outside the classroom. Campus climate is intricately linked to learning outcomes for students. Increasing diversity on campus without addressing the climate can result in difficulties for students from underrepresented groups. Additionally, a diverse learning environment can lead to benefits for all students, including improvements in intergroup relations, the ability to engage in complex feelings about problems, and the ability to consider multiple perspectives. Our college will need to grow and adapt to our changing student population, providing institutional support and attending to the specific needs of underserved groups.

Red Rocks Community College will work to create and maintain a campus climate that is welcoming, inclusive, and supports positive interactions between stakeholders from multiple groups, including but not limited to current and prospective students, faculty, and staff, as well as community members. We will be known as a college where everyone is supported to succeed and fulfill their goals. In order to do this, we will need to centralize the importance of diversity and inclusion within the college, and acknowledge how it is necessary to fulfill our educational mission. We will do this by:

- **Providing education for students, faculty, and staff in diversity appreciation and intercultural competence.**
- **Training students, faculty, and staff on our non-discrimination policies, as well as how to report acts of bias or discrimination.**
- **Providing opportunities for education through campus events and programs.**
- **Creating a welcoming environment for historically underrepresented groups.**

Provide education for students, faculty, and staff in diversity appreciation and intercultural competence

- Develop intercultural competence training program for faculty and staff
- Track learning outcomes and results
- Develop additional training on topics specific to the needs of the college
- Include diversity in the learning outcomes for the college

Communicate our policy for acts of bias or discrimination

- Evaluate existing reporting procedure
- Create reporting website
- Train students, faculty, and staff on how to report incidents of bias

Provide opportunities for education through campus events and programs

- Recognize cultural and heritage months through programming
- Utilize the display case to educate the campus on diversity issues
- Create a display case on the Arvada campus
- Encourage deliberative dialogue through programs and faculty instruction

Create a welcoming environment for historically underrepresented groups.

- Assess the campus climate through a visual scan
- Establish a physical Center for Inclusion & Diversity on the RRCC Lakewood Campus
- Expand accessibility on campus

Create and maintain a campus climate that is welcoming, inclusive, and supports positive interactions between stakeholders from multiple groups

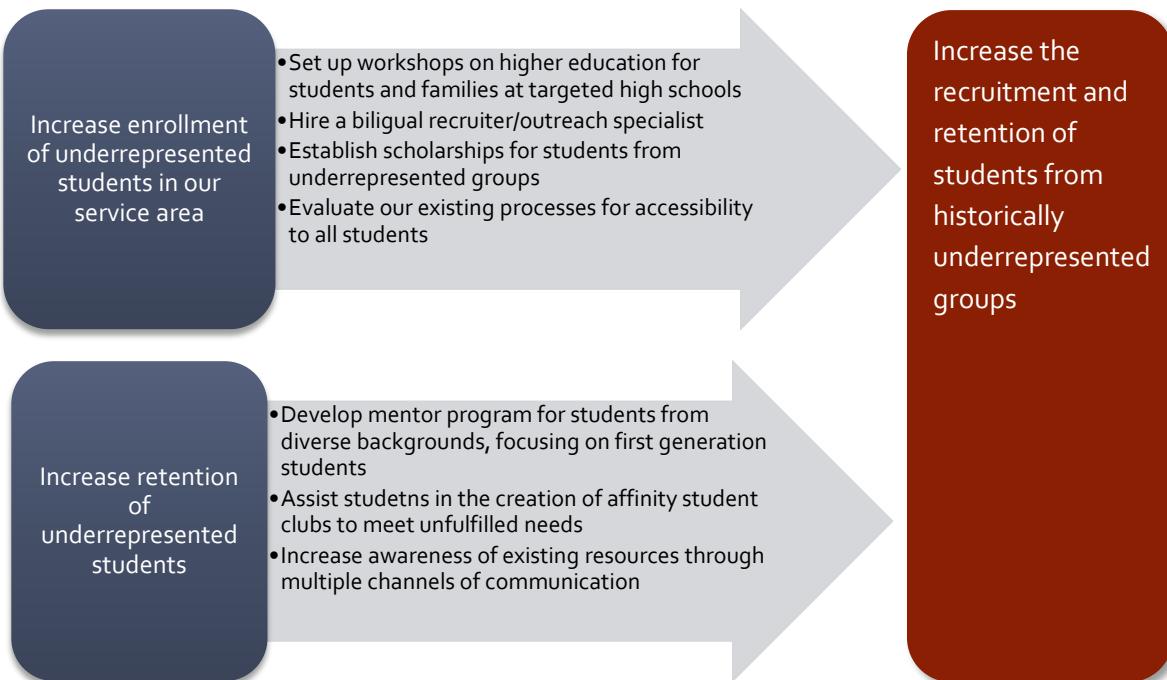
## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

Red Rocks Community College has robust and thriving recruitment and marketing programs. While general recruitment strategies are succeeding, we will dedicate ourselves to develop innovative strategies to target underserved student populations, as well as diverse candidate pools in our searches for faculty, staff, and administrators. Currently, Hispanic children comprise 31% of the total population of those 18 and under in Colorado. Specifically, Jefferson County saw the fourth largest gain in the Hispanic population in the state, increasing from 52,449 to 76,445 (46%) from the 2000 to the 2012 census. In order to keep up with the demand for higher education opportunities and to recruit from this key demographic, we will develop strategies to attract and enroll Hispanic students, making RRCC a college of first choice for the Hispanic and Latino community members in our service area. We will also build on our current recruitment programs by utilizing our strengths, such as our services for Veterans and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) students. By highlighting the ways we are already embracing diversity, we will move forward with an approach that recognizes the needs of a multitude of learners and demonstrates our commitment to potential students. It will be an approach which is cognizant of how we as a college are perceived by a variety of communities, paying special attention to

how we can not only attract these students, but also to how our institution serves these students once they are enrolled.

Red Rocks Community College puts the success of our students as one of our highest priorities. In order to facilitate their success, retention must be at the forefront of our minds. We will:

- **Increase enrollment of underrepresented students in our service area**
- **Increase retention of underrepresented student populations**



## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF EMPLOYEES

For reasons similar to those for our student populations, attending to the recruitment and retention of our employees will contribute immensely to the success of our institution. Research has shown that one factor that affects the choice of college and persistence of students from underserved backgrounds is having faculty and staff at the institution that are relatable and that reflect who they are as people. By increasing the diversity of our employees, we will attract and retain a more diverse student body.

Recruiting a more diverse employee base will also serve as its own advantage to the college. A more diverse work group leads to important outcomes such as increased productivity, problem solving, and

innovation. Expanding our search reach to include previously untapped resources will be an important progression toward this goal, as well as modifying our current search processes to include elements that address our desire to increase the diversity of our employees. We will do this because we acknowledge that finding the best candidate for a position will require a diverse pool, ensuring that we aren't excluding qualified applicants through lack of reach or scope.

Retaining our employees will benefit the college by creating a sense of inclusion and belonging for those working here. It will also have a financial benefit, as it costs less money to keep an employee than to hire a new one. By being proactive in providing training and professional development opportunities that equip faculty and staff to effectively work with each other and students from diverse backgrounds, we will create an environment where each employee can thrive in their respective roles. Specifically, people of color are three times more likely to leave an employer due to bias related reasons, and therefore training for faculty and staff intercultural competence will lead to fewer incidents of discrimination and more employee satisfaction. An inclusive environment will increase camaraderie and collaboration throughout the college, leading to an improved campus climate and stronger outcomes for the students we serve. Employee satisfaction increases productivity, reduces absenteeism, and reduces turnover. Satisfied employees are our best recruiters, and creating a welcoming environment will lead to more avenues for recruiting through positive communication about the college and our values. Our strategies to meet the challenges of a diverse workforce are described below.

- **Increase hiring of faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds**
- **Increase retention of faculty and staff**

### Increase hiring of faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds

- Develop Human Resources policies that lead to more diverse candidate pools
- Train search committees on the importance of diversity
- Research and implement best practices for advertising positions to a diverse group of candidates
- Include guidance on RRCC's value of inclusiveness in the search committee handbook

### Increase retention of faculty and staff

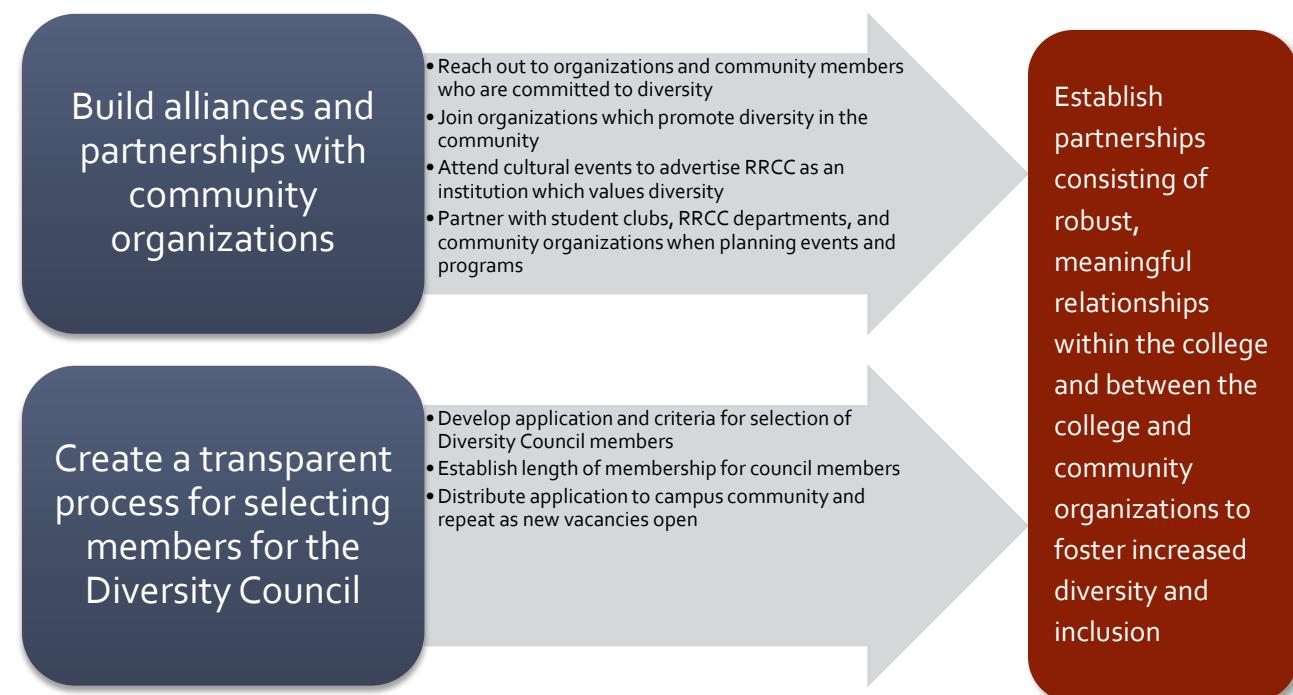
- Create mentor program for new faculty from underrepresented backgrounds
- Create identity interest groups for faculty and staff
- Evaluate and update exit process for faculty and staff who leave RRCC

Improve recruitment and retention of faculty and staff to be more inclusive of historically underrepresented populations

# OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

One of the prime functions of a community college is to involve the community which it serves. Collaboration through programs, events, and outreach will assist in developing strong relationships with community organizations, businesses, and educational institutions. As with employee satisfaction, building these partnerships will assist in recruitment and retention by creating a reputation for Red Rocks Community College as an inclusive and welcoming place to learn and grow. We will continue to foster existing relationships with the community as a whole, while also identifying key organizations for future partnerships. In this domain our employees will be our best ambassadors. The staff and faculty of RRCC have high levels of engagement in their communities, and will also know where inroads can be made to the organizations of which they are a part. We will also utilize our human capital for the initiatives at the college and in committees; specifically, we will encourage stronger participation with the diversity council and welcome ideas from all across the college.

- **Build alliances and partnerships with community organizations**
- **Create transparent process for selecting members for the Diversity Council**

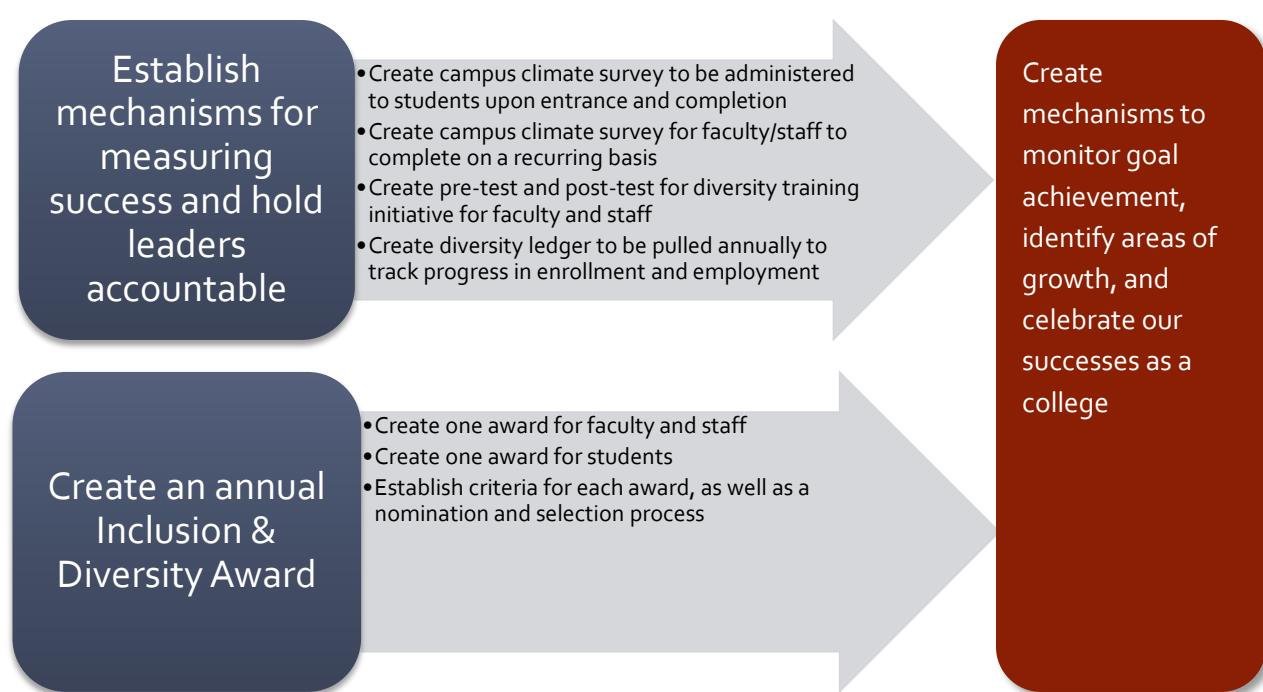


# EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Red Rocks Community College Strategic Diversity Plan will only be effective with key indicators of success in place. Measurable outcomes will facilitate adjustments and revisions as we move forward. In choosing programs and strategies to move toward our diversity and inclusion goals, we will utilize best practices while evaluating programs for effectiveness. Accountability will also ensure that those on the front lines of various service areas throughout the college are putting forth their best efforts in advancing our diversity initiatives. By setting goals and seeing them through to completion, we will ensure that our efforts are not in vain. Rather, we will be able to celebrate our successes and address areas of concern as we implement the strategies contained in this plan.

Through collaboration and by the efforts of each and every employee, we will be able to achieve our goals. As work units develop their own strategies for implementing various portions of this plan, best practices will evolve throughout the college. Not all strategies will be transferrable between work units, but we can utilize the resources at our disposal, including the Collaboration Council, committees, constituency groups, and other channels of communication in order to share best practices and develop creative approaches to address the challenges we face. We will:

- **Establish mechanisms for measuring success and hold leaders accountable**
- **Create an annual Inclusion & Diversity award**



# OUR PATH FORWARD

---

The Strategic Plan for Inclusion and Diversity for Red Rocks Community College is an ambitious one, but also filled with possibility. We will create an inclusive campus climate, increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, and foster partnerships within our communities. Will ensure our success through the establishment of mechanisms for measuring our progress, and we will hold each other accountable to our institutional goals.

Through the support of our leadership and the sharing of knowledge, we will face these challenges head on. It will take the involvement of not just specific departments or people, but rather an intentional effort by each one of us to make this plan a success. We must be flexible with our approaches. We must be honest about our shortcomings, and we must live the values of Red Rocks Community College; our integrity, collaboration, commitment to learning, inclusiveness, and communication will guide us. As with any initiative involving cultural change and progress, we will likely encounter obstacles. However, with our commitment strongly in place, and with a plan to move forward, we will provide all students, faculty, and staff with the best educational and personal experience possible. We will create a climate of inclusion where students, faculty, and staff are supported and empowered in their personal journeys. Through equity in access, developmental opportunities, and holistic education, we will prepare all members of the RRCC community to actively engage in an increasingly diverse and global society. This is our charge, and together we will make it a reality.

## References

- Bailey, T., Alfonso, M., Calcagno, J.C., Jenkins, D., Kienzl, G., Leinbach, T. (2004). Improving student attainment in community colleges: Institutional characteristics and policies. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved from [http://inpathways.net/improving\\_attainment.pdf](http://inpathways.net/improving_attainment.pdf).
- Colorado Department of Education. (2007). Programs to improve the retention and success of underserved students at Colorado public institutions. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED500371.pdf>.
- Cooper, M. (2010). Student Support Services at Community Colleges: A strategy for increasing student persistence and attainment. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/PDFDocs/college-completion/o4-student-support-services-at-community-colleges.pdf>.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pederson, A., Allen, W. (1999). Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education. *ERIC Digest*, 1-5.
- Rankin, S. (2005). Campus climates for sexual minorities. *New Directions for Student Services*, 111, 17-23.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2000). *Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 Census Summary File 1*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2010). *State & County Quickfacts: Jefferson County, CO*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08/08059.html>.