

The Colorado College State of the Rockies Project **Research, Report, Engage!**

An Introduction from the President of Colorado College

The 2012 Colorado College State of the Rockies Report Card



Leah Lieber

As Colorado College's new president, I am excited to introduce my first Colorado College State of the Rockies *Report Card*. I view the Rockies Project as one of the college's signature programs and an important community, regional, even national resource. On behalf of the college community, welcome to this ninth annual report of vital student research on an iconic part of the college's Rockies backyard. The Colorado River Basin represents a world-renowned natural wonder in the American West. For decades our students and faculty have studied this region, even as they have rafted its rivers, climbed its cliffs and mountains, and hiked through its forests. Indeed, our environment in the Rockies region has fundamentally shaped our institution. Through the Rockies Project we continue to give back by studying critical aspects of the economy and environment that are so unique and yet fragile.

During summer 2011 and into this academic year, the Rockies Project has concentrated on a multi-faceted and ambitious evaluation and celebration of the Colorado River Basin. Student summer research, subsequently peer reviewed and edited, comprises the sections of this *Report Card* that focus on the law of the river basin, its infrastructure, associated agriculture and economies, recreation, and environmental challenges. In October 2011 to late January 2012, two recent CC graduates endured an epic 1,700-mile "source to sea" kayak trip from the head waters of the Green River in Wyoming to the delta in

Mexico, documented in social media and blogs.

Monthly speakers have enriched our campus intellectual environment, bringing renowned experts to discuss Colorado River Basin exploration, law and management, climate, environmental challenges, healthy forests, and unheard voices of Mexico and Native American tribes. An April 2012 Rockies Conference, at which this *Report Card* was unveiled, continued the focus on the Colorado River Basin with sessions on federal Department of Interior management challenges, state of Colorado uses and claims on the river, and a portion of the basin we call the "western slope." A student photo contest displaying a Save the Colorado River Basin banner in each picture, enticed students, faculty, and alumni to explore and document favorite parts of the region. Associated with all of



Colorado College President Jill Tiefenthaler with her family on the Colorado River

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this, the Rockies Project for a second year has facilitated and hosted a unique Conservation in the West Survey of public opinion, garnering widespread publicity.

An additional, longer-term dimension of the Rockies Project is its yearly pool of student researchers, now totaling more than 40. I celebrate and underscore our commitment to maintaining and strengthening the Rockies Project's undergraduate leadership component. We are proud that increasing numbers of our graduates who participated in the Rockies Project have gone on to graduate school and careers in conservation.

Our college mission statement continues to guide us in our goals and highlights the importance of the Rockies region so important to our character:

At Colorado College our goal is to provide the finest liberal arts education in the country. Drawing upon the adventurous spirit of the Rocky Mountain West, we challenge students, one course at a time, to develop those habits of intellect and imagination that will prepare them for learning and leadership throughout their lives.

I invite you to explore the Rockies through the material in this *Report Card*, other aspects of the Rockies Project, and indeed the many dimensions of our uniquely located college. I am confident that you will be informed, challenged, and stimulated in your knowledge and thinking. At the same time I encourage you to reflect back on and celebrate the Rockies region so important to all of us. Thank you for caring enough to learn more about and contribute to protecting the unique features and character that make the Rockies region everyone's special backyard.



Colorado College President Jill Tiefenthaler

Jill Tiefenthaler
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Colorado College



Colorado College Geology Department, A Geology Field Trip to Grand Canyon National Park