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Final Report of the Mental Health Assessment & Action Panel for Colorado College

Executive Summary

Rankin Climate was charged with convening an expert panel to respond to recent events at Colorado College related to student health and wellness. A team of three nationally-renowned experts in student health and higher education conducted a thorough review of Colorado Colleges' programming, resources, policies, documentation, and communications strategies related to campus wellness. This thorough review included a two-day campus visit, where the panelists met with approximately 200 Colorado College students, staff, faculty, and administrators within focused discussion sessions on campus wellness. Based on this study, it is clear that Colorado College is committed to providing a healthy and supportive environment for its students, faculty, and staff. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on mental health and wellness on campus. This report outlines the current state of mental health and wellness at Colorado College and makes recommendations for improvement.

The panel identified several factors that contribute to mental health and wellness at Colorado College. These factors include the academic demands of the College, the stress associated with maintaining and navigating social and professional relationships, and the impact of shared trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic and student deaths. Some of Colorado College's greatest strengths also present some of its greatest challenges: Colorado College is a selective institution with motivated and high-achieving students, faculty, and staff – this is positive, but it can also lead to stress and pressure experienced by students as well as faculty and staff. Colorado College is a close-knit community, which leads students, faculty, and

staff to care deeply about one another, but it can also lead to social pressures and conflict over governance and communication strategies.

The following general recommendations are made to improve mental health and wellness at Colorado College:

- Create a clear and consistent messaging strategy related to mental health and wellness. This messaging should be communicated through a variety of channels, including the website, social media, and campus events.
- Invest in mental health resources by expanding support for the counseling center, health center, and peer support programs. This investment will help to ensure that students have access to support when needed.
- Develop a comprehensive wellness plan that includes both individual and community-based interventions. This plan should be based on the best available evidence and should be tailored to the specific needs and resources of the Colorado College community and Colorado Springs.
- Continue to create a supportive campus culture by taking small steps to reduce community-member stress, promote healthy relationships, and provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to connect.
- Leverage Colorado College's innovative Block Plan to further integrate wellness with existing high-contact and community-based learning activities.
- Facilitate a resource exchange and consolidation effort across faculty, staff, and administrators to share new ideas and offer more consistency in guidance and recommendations to students across the College.
- Continue to support and incentivize students, staff, and faculty for their efforts to promote campus wellness through awards, internal funding mechanisms, and other resources and recognition.

Mental health and wellness are important for all members of the Colorado College community. The recommendations in this report will help to create a healthier and more supportive environment for everyone. These recommendations are just a starting point. By taking action to improve mental health and wellness at Colorado College, we can create a healthier and more supportive environment for everyone.

Expert Panelists

Dr. Sierra Carter focuses on racial health disparities and investigates how psychosocial and contextual stressors can affect mental and physical health outcomes for underrepresented populations. She has had a long-standing interest in how health disparities in African American populations arise and are maintained by psychological, physiological, and contextual processes. A common theme throughout much of her work has been examining how, across a life course, racial discrimination as an acute and chronic stressor can affect development and further exacerbate chronic illnesses and stress-related disorders.

Dr. Carter's work is primarily aimed to promote racial health equity. Her consultation and workshops provided in this area focus on practices that enable and support community discussions on topics related to racism, trauma, colorblind ideologies, and historical oppression. She also utilizes a strength-based approach to interactively highlight practices to promote anti-racism and collective action for change.

Dr. Darrell Ray has held several positions at various institutions, including the University of Georgia, the Art Institute of Atlanta, Louisiana State University, the University of Memphis, and Rhodes College. He has presented nationally and internationally and worked with organizations abroad to better position them in meeting their goals. Education credentials include a BA and MA from the College of Alabama and a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. His additional training and certifications are in fundraising, grant-writing, diversity, equity, & inclusion, and group facilitation.

Trained as an educator, Dr. Ray's 25-year background as an executive-level administrator, faculty member, and trainer has positioned him to become one of higher education's thought leaders in equity, instruction, and strategic planning. Dr. Ray's deep understanding of the interplay between equity and diversity positions him to assist organizations in equity-related training, equity-centered coaching, strategic planning, and implementation.

Dr. Kevin Swartout is a professor in the Department of Psychology with a joint appointment in the School of Public Health at Georgia State University. His research addresses the epidemiology and prevention of violence and harassment to promote safer campuses and communities. Within this line of work, he has conducted research supported by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention on the epidemiology of suicide attempts and the risk and protective factors for suicide among emerging adults. Dr. Swartout's research has garnered awards from the International Society for Research on Aggression, the Southeastern Psychological Association, and Georgia State University.

Dr. Swartout chairs the ARC3 (Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative), which developed a campus climate survey that has been implemented by over 350 US colleges and universities. He also currently serves as a Senior Consulting Editor for the journal *Psychology of Violence*, published by the American Psychological Association.

Approach

The panel's approach to this study included five distinct phases:

Phase I Drs. Carter, Ray, and Swartout conducted an environmental scan and document review of the information available on Colorado College's website, documents provided by the College, and the infrastructure and resources available to students, staff, faculty, and administrators. This process further familiarized the expert panel with Colorado College. The panelists additionally examined the campus mission and organizational charts, reviewed previous research/institutional data addressing climate and student health, and examined local environments to gain a greater cultural context of the spaces where students frequently engage with Colorado College staff, faculty, and one another.

Phase II Rankin Climate collaborated with partner agency RW Jones to review communications and communications strategies from the past 12 months (since November 1, 2022) related to student health and wellness.

Phase III Drs. Carter, Ray, and Swartout visited campus in February 2023 to conduct interviews and listening sessions with key students, staff, faculty, and administrators to gather more information, develop a deeper understanding of the campus culture, and hear the voices across populations.

Phase IV Drs. Carter, Ray, and Swartout—along with partner agency RW Jones—reviewed the results of the previous three phases to develop a series of actionable recommendations Colorado College can take to improve students' mental and physical health while reducing the likelihood of harm. This will include structural recommendations as needed to improve student wellness and mental health that may suggest changes related to staffing, organization, or resource provision.

Phase V Drs. Carter, Ray, and Swartout have developed and shared this final report and presentation detailing these recommendations with Colorado College leadership and the broader campus community. Based on more than two decades of assessing campus climate, Rankin Climate and RW Jones will continue to support the development of practices, programs, or policies to help Colorado College use this expert review process to enact meaningful change on campus.



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Introduction

The panel would like to begin by thanking Colorado College—its students, staff, faculty, and administrators—for engaging with us and providing opportunities to learn about what wellness looks like on their campus and their ongoing efforts to promote student wellness. Our goal in this report is to present the framework for a comprehensive plan to promote students' mental and physical well-being and reduce Colorado College students' suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide completions.

This report is organized into 5 sections addressing communication, policies & procedures, campus culture, human capital & networks, and innovation. Each section presents distinct reflections drawn from our environmental scan and campus conversations and detailed recommendations for how the College can move ahead in each area. The report concludes with comments that address College assets and the immediate path forward.

Improve Communication & Messaging

Based on this review, the College could work to define, operationalize, and communicate wellness as a value more consistently. It is essential for Colorado College to demonstrate its commitment to wellness by further integrating wellness into its mission and operations. A commitment to wellness can be shaped through shared strategic priorities and goals that are communicated throughout the campus community. Define the main indicators of mental health and wellness. This may be different across different campus positions and subgroups, but it will be important to utilize an intentional process to develop common indicators and intentional deviations when needed. Also consider establishing a system for routine evaluation

of these definitions and indicators to adapt to contextual changes, assess progress, and troubleshoot setbacks.

The panel found little in the way of a formal, cohesive strategy for managing messaging and communication related to student wellness. Mental health and wellness must be Colorado College's expressed priority – communicated clearly and consistently by the highest level of College leadership. These messages should convey Colorado College's long-term commitment to a "healthy" campus environment. Wellness should be woven into the fabric of the Colorado College community, potentially akin to the spirit of outdoor adventure and experience in the way it should be baked into the ethos of the College moving forward. As the communications staff expands, each new community member will be critical in providing the bandwidth to make this effort possible, although embedding these messages across campus must be an institutional effort. Wellness messaging should therefore not be the sole responsibility of the communications office; rather, it should be a joint effort across administrators, faculty, staff, and student organizations.

Some current expectations on some of the efforts Colorado College could or should be enacting are somewhat unrealistic, and likely the result of miscommunication or lack of a clearly defined mission and terminology related to student wellness. Shared operational definitions for wellness in messaging, policy statements, and everyday communication will be critical to the efforts that will frame campus expectations moving forward. All campus communications related to wellness (printed, email, web, etc.) should undergo a review process to ensure they reinforce the institutional wellness message. The cabinet should be in alignment and adopt common wellness language and goals across divisions. Following this, craft expectations for all those who are in leadership or supervisory roles below the cabinet. This clear and direct process should ensure messaging alignment.

Because of the history of visible mental health-related emergencies at Colorado College, there is an acute focus on mental health and overall wellness for students as well as faculty and staff. However, students do not seem to fully understand their pressures until they become deeply overwhelmed. Evidence-based and sustained communication techniques are critical to the promotion of a college culture that centers mental health and wellness within the college experience. Communicating

the true experience and pressures that come with the Block schedule should be part of the orientation and welcome week process, with hopes that students will be better equipped to recognize the signs that stressors in their lives could become less manageable.

To raise awareness of the presence and importance of campus wellness resources, the College should review current communication strategies and identify areas that need to be created, improved, adapted, or more formally implemented. Strategies to consider based on this review are to:

- Make wellness resources generally more visible and easily accessible across platforms.
- Foster and coordinate wellness information and resources to be located in one specific place (website or physical space), so community members will know where to go when they need quick and easily-accessible wellness information and resources.
- Ensure definitions and messaging related to mental health and wellness are consistent across documentation and resources.
- Embed messaging and direct actions around “mental health” as a crucial component of “wellness” and “wellness” as a crucial component of an even more holistic state of “well-being.”

Efforts to promote overall well-being seem to be siloed on campus. There is notable confusion among faculty, staff, and students about who is responsible for addressing and responding to wellness and well-being concerns. Additional confusion was noted regarding what health and wellness resources exist, how to use them, who is eligible to use them (and when), and the procedures to access services for oneself or another student or colleague. Cross-collaboration is needed among service units to implement strategic plans and promote unified messaging on wellness.

Tailored messaging on wellness should be developed for vulnerable populations and any students who are transitioning into or out of Colorado College, including incoming students, transfer students, and graduating students. Steps to facilitate this messaging might include:

- Integrating wellness messaging into student, faculty, and staff orientations and any other longstanding first-year programming.
- Ensuring comprehensive information on mental health resources is available to the Colorado College community either in person or through handouts.
- Creating a written 'First Year Student Guide' for first-year students that is devoted to wellness; potentially "How to Grow and Thrive" at Colorado College.
- Creating programming or written resources for graduating students to help prepare them to maintain wellness during the major transition out of college and into their next life phase.
- Compiling information on wellness resources in a format suitable for parents/families, so they know who to contact at Colorado College if their student reaches out to them in crisis.
- Developing a communications strategy to engage and inform alumni of the expanded focus on campus wellness. This could lead to increased external support.
- Working to inform the Colorado College Board of Trustees of all of the student wellness-related efforts on campus and confirm their support for the initiatives.

More preventative communication methods are needed. Some Colorado College staff members noted that they rarely interact with students on "good days;" often, staff's only options are "reactive." Prioritize messaging that encourages students to seek assistance before they are in crisis, when possible. Recommendations for preventive and proactive communication include:

- Promote proactive use of campus and community resources before a crisis occurs.
- Develop a communication campaign centered on wellness for a specific Block that could include a tagline such as "We All Want to Be Well" or "Be Healthy, Feel Well, Make a Difference".

- Develop a website that contains resources with useful tools and strategies for students to use when they are feeling distressed (possibly on the counseling center site); For example:
 - How to stay healthy while facing the challenges of college life.
 - How to thrive during “Hard Blocks”.
 - Brief Mindfulness and Breathing Strategies to Reduce Stress.

Additional Communication & Messaging Recommendations

- Consider coordinating community conversations after high-impact events to efficiently communicate updates or responses and avoid information loss as messages are translated from one community member to another.
- After mental health incidents have occurred on or around campus, evaluate how the response plan functioned and how the event was communicated, including:
 - Speed of the response. If there are areas where there was slow response or communication, consider evaluating and revising relevant communication strategies. The most promising way to ensure a coordinated response is to have the response planned out ahead of time and have templated documents prepared.
 - Consider including face-to-face communication and support services for individuals on campus who were directly affected by the incident (for example, faculty who instructed a student in crisis during that Block).
- Consider investing in a mental health app for students who could benefit from technology-facilitated peer support and access to resources.
- Create an easy-to-search mental health resource database with Colorado College services along with community mental health services at a low cost or sliding scale for students.

Promote Consistency in Policies, Procedures, and Information Transfer

Historically, Colorado College has relied on a wealth of institutional wisdom and traditions to make many daily decisions rather than relying on written policies or procedures. Faculty, staff, and students expressed concerns related to inconsistencies in responses provided to and received from administrators, faculty, and staff. There is a sense that students or their parents in some cases might “shop” for their most desirable response to a question by asking different staff members or offices until one gives them the answer for which they were looking. This phenomenon seemed to be true of policies and procedures related to wellness as well as other aspects of the student experience at Colorado College. Efforts are currently underway to develop more consistent policies and procedures, but much of that work is yet to be done. It is important to systematically clarify communication and policies related to student well-being and mental health resources, especially those relevant to crisis situations. This includes:

- Both online and offline policy and procedure documents.
- Information on average wait time students should expect before they can receive mental health services
- Guidelines for who is appropriate to contact when a student is in immediate need of mental health assistance.
- Processes for triaging cases, making referrals to the Counseling Center, and making referrals to off-campus behavioral health services.

Additionally, like many US institutions of higher education, Colorado College has recently experienced a high degree of staff turnover. These transitions occurred within a much broader context where there were often relatively few opportunities for information transfer between staff members leaving positions and individuals filling those positions in either a temporary or permanent capacity. These recent issues related to turnover and information transfer have magnified the importance of developing consistent policies and procedures that transcend any staff member or

position. Colorado College should consider conducting a study on staff turnover over the past 5 years to determine if there are discernable & addressable patterns. Conduct further analysis on any patterns that may emerge. Additionally, the College might consider offering staff exit interviews to capture a deeper understanding of the employee experience. With limited administrator and staff time and resources, these exit interviews could be conducted by an external firm or an online survey.

Additional Policy, Procedure, and Information Transfer Recommendations

- Conduct a review of current policies to ensure they are equity and wellness-centered. There may be less of a need to develop new policies if existing policies can be updated or adapted for the current context and the desired culture change.
- (Re)Educate administrators, faculty, and staff on adapted, or edited policies and procedures to ensure alignment.
- When a formal “changing of the guard” through training and mentorship is not possible, interview staff members leaving Colorado College or transferring to a different role to capture knowledge and insights on their position that can be offered to the next person who will fill that role.
- Clarify what students should expect from the Colorado College Counseling Center in internal and community-facing documentation. This should include what presenting conditions the Center can accommodate and what situations will likely lead to a referral to off-campus resources.
- Create additional mechanisms for feedback between administrators and faculty, staff, and students that are likely to facilitate constructive conversations without fear of retaliation.

Develop a Collective Culture of Wellness

As stated on the Student Health Center webpage, “The College has made health care services available to students since 1936.” The new state-of-the-art Student Health Center and Wellness Resource Center provide a tremendous resource to launch a more integrated culture of wellness on campus. With these recent changes, the partnership with Optum Health, and all of the ongoing efforts to improve student wellness at Colorado College, it is important to bridge efforts when possible, for consistency and efficiency. A sense of urgency has been created concerning student mental health, but a singular focus on mental health would miss the many dimensions of student development. It is therefore important to integrate efforts across the College and dimensions of student well-being.

A strength of the Colorado College community is how committed students, staff, faculty, and administrators are to promoting well-being on campus. This asset should be nurtured. One option is to create and identify a group of diverse students, staff, and faculty who can serve as wellness ambassadors or “champions” across campus to implement holistic wellness strategies. This could help eliminate siloed efforts across departments and programs to increase wellness and build community. These identified ambassadors could report back to Student Wellness Programs periodically. Over time, the culture of wellness will be supported by concerted efforts to promote health and well-being as a continuous learning strategy.

Amplify campus celebrations and traditions, or incorporate new ones, to reinforce community and increase connections for social well-being. At the student level, develop plans that take into account the fact that some students will need relatively long-term mental health support. Develop strategies that will position students to transition smoothly from shorter-term campus resources to longer-term support in the community. There should also be a specific support plan tailored to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure they have equitable access to mental and physical health resources where possible.

Increase staffing and resources specifically dedicated to providing comprehensive student wellness care. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, and multiple approaches are likely needed:

- Expand the reach and scale of the Counseling Center staff by increasing the number of counseling groups in the Wellness Resource Center.

- Provide students with increased access to counseling services, including brief therapy services in group or single sessions.
- Enhance relationships with external mental health and wellness resources to facilitate more referrals when needed.
- The Counseling Center staff is relatively diverse, largely by virtue of the many part-time staff. This diversity could be increased further by purchasing virtual hours for students who would like to speak with diverse clinicians.

The identity and vision of the Counseling Center and Wellness Resource Center, collectively and respectively, are not coherent or cohesive. For example, different members of the Colorado College community interpret the Counseling Center as either a traditional higher education counseling center, a modern multidisciplinary mental health service, or an outpatient psychiatric center. These perception gaps related to the Counseling Center's identity and scope can lead to confusion, lack of trust, and deficits in equitable student mental health services. Therefore, work is needed to accurately define and communicate the services the Counseling Center can provide students based on its mission and current resources. While reviewing and defining the Counseling Center's scope of services, a secondary goal should be to develop and implement a new streamlined and visible triage process that will efficiently transition students in need of mental health services to an appointment with a provider or an appropriate referral. Once completed, these definitions and processes must be shared broadly with the community through multiple channels.

To build a collective culture of wellness it is important to foster a campus that carries goodwill and mutual respect. These recommendations underscore the importance of promoting wellness and a sense of community across the entire College. For this to be actualized, a large majority of Colorado College community members need to feel connected and take ownership over creating and supporting a student body that is healthy, resilient, and compassionate. Consider establishing a faculty peer-consulting group specific to student well-being and socio-emotional support, where faculty can learn from one another and provide support to one another. Provide accessible training for faculty and staff on how to support, identify, and understand mental health difficulties and suicidal ideation among students. Training opportunities might include:

- Syllabus development tips for faculty that include standardized language on mental health and wellness.
- “How to talk with a student in distress” for faculty and staff.
- “The signs of suicidal ideation” for faculty, staff, and students.

Most Colorado College faculty and staff members are not trained mental health service providers. However, they can provide immediate “aid” for students in crisis while they facilitate a hand-off to trained service providers. Consider creating a faculty and staff guide to support student mental health (for example, a “Mental Health First Aid Kit”). This guide could list resources for faculty and staff, within the boundaries of their role, and information to help them detect the warning signs (for example repeated absences, potentially alarming content or disclosures in class or on assignments, continuously sad affect, and poor personal hygiene). Consider creating a “Do’s and Don’ts List” for faculty and staff – accessible on the Colorado College website – that includes information similar to the following:

- Do: Find a quiet space to discuss difficulties.
- Do: Acknowledge and validate a student’s struggles.
- Don’t: Invalidate or underestimate how much a student could be struggling
- Do: Provide resources to students in crisis.
- Don’t: Promise confidentiality if there are potential laws or College policies that mandate reporting that a student is an imminent risk to themselves or someone else.

Several community members expressed difficulties feeling “psychologically safe” at times on campus. There is a need for increased transparency and grace for missteps as the community repairs. Additionally, concerns were raised about the campus racial climate during the discussions. Therefore, a crucial step in this process will be to review the College’s goals centered on DEI and the recent study addressing racial battle fatigue to assess how those goals are being addressed and how more general campus health and wellness initiatives can fit with those related initiatives. Support for diversity needs to be intentionally expanded beyond race/ethnicity and

gender/sexuality. Visible efforts should be made to address disparities related to community members' physical abilities, neurodiversity, and other forms of difference across campus. Additionally, work to identify areas where staff members feel they are treated as 'less than' relative to faculty members, especially in areas related to shared governance.

Consistent evaluation and refinement are key to longstanding, effective campus services and programming. Initial steps are needed to set expectations, define what success will mean for this initiative, and identify what will be measured moving forward. If those definitions or measures are vague, the campus community may not see them as important, and the initiatives will fail. Success will be benchmarked by definitions that are specific, clear, and consistent with Colorado College's culture and mission. Consider encouraging Colorado College community members to track and reach their mental health goals, similar to how many campuses and workplaces encourage health by tracking physical health goals. For example, a public dashboard on campus or on a website format that aggregates indicators of progress toward identified mental health and wellness goals across units, majors, dormitories, and other identifiers. This could serve the dual effect of helping community members quantify and track their progress, and communicating Colorado College's sustained commitment to health and wellness to the community.

Additional Collective Culture of Wellness Recommendations

- Clarify the role of the chaplain in the wellness space. There seem to be varying expectations and assumptions of the Chaplain role across campus.
- Develop regular opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to increase their knowledge of wellness topics in a community environment that will facilitate practicing skills and therapeutic strategies to further enhance well-being.
- Prioritize restorative conversations to promote the desired high level of connection and investment across campus subpopulations. Each conversation should produce a short list of action items focused on developing a collective culture of wellness.

- Consider providing incentives for departments/units to make progress toward promoting unit-level well-being, that will improve the collective campus experience for students, staff, and faculty. Provide materials and guidance resources to help them meet their goals.
- Consider developing a campaign, similar to many physical health campaigns on campus, where students, staff, and faculty can earn rewards for engaging and progressing toward mental health and wellness goals.

Leverage Human Capital & Campus Networks

Colorado College students, staff, faculty, and administrators are working extremely hard to make the campus better each and every day. One of the great strengths noted by the panel during their campus visit was the high level of care and support community members expressed for one another. This scale was balanced a bit by consistent concerns stemming from a general lack of trust across groups on campus. Part of this is owed to the fact that each community member is working extremely hard to live up to the Colorado College ideal for their role on campus. That is compounded by a general lack of awareness on how or why some College decisions are made, and what shared governance should look like in those decision-making processes.

In some cases, the staff workplace environment at Colorado College is experienced differently as a function of a person's level in the organization. Staff in entry and mid-level positions are feeling "overworked and undervalued". People in these positions carry a large amount of the College workload and serve in student-facing roles on a daily basis. Staff members see positions being created and filled at the Associate Vice President level, and they wonder why those resources are not used to fill open positions in their offices. More communication is needed on the College's hiring strategy and how it is intended to positively impact the staff who reside in those units.

Additionally, a long-term strategy is needed to address unhealthy work norms among Colorado College staff. Over time, this will build a culture of trust, compassion, acknowledgment, and recognition among staff that will ultimately benefit students. Although there is already a "Just Say 'No'" slogan on campus for

staff, faculty, and administrators – meant to give them license to communicate when their workload is becoming untenable – staff and administrators have major concerns with putting this advice into practice. Most were not concerned about the direct negative repercussions of saying “No” or any form of retaliation; however, they are concerned saying “No” might have indirect, long-term adverse effects on their workplace relationships and career prospects at the College. Colorado College staff members care about their colleagues, and they know that if they decline a task, it will fall to a peer who might be just as overwhelmed. There was also a sense that, while the community appreciates the “1,000 flowers” metaphor, all 1,000 do not need to be planned at the same time; more can be done to prioritize tasks and initiatives to address staff workload concerns.

Human Resources should have a more defined role in shifting organizational culture among faculty and staff. This could be embedded in the performance appraisal process or through ongoing training. Administrators can identify students, staff, and faculty who are going above and beyond on efforts related to wellness and demonstrate alignment with the College’s well-being goals and provide acknowledgments and rewards (awards, certificates, mini-grant awards to continue wellness initiatives across campus). Additionally, Colorado College can create an accountability plan for missteps, particularly for DEI-related missteps, that is shared with everyone and fairly implemented. This process will be easier to implement once there are clearer expectations and standardizations of operations as articulated in the Policy and Procedure section of this report.

Several roles at the College should be clarified or re-aligned with respect to their responsibility and intended impact on student wellness. First and foremost, it will be critical to integrate the new Associate Vice President for Wellness into ongoing wellness and equity efforts on campus as quickly and thoroughly as possible. This office will be the natural hub to coordinate – but not necessarily manage – all wellness resources, activities, and messaging across campus and liaise with the community. There does not appear to be a formal linkage between recreation and wellness in regard to programming or messaging, which should be addressed to facilitate collaboration and consistent expectations. Additionally, each unit in the College should have a strategy for liaising with Counseling Center staff to support students. These expectations should come from the cabinet level to ensure

compliance. Each respective VP should consistently assess the extent to which their areas are collaborating to reinforce long-term wellness improvements.

Additional Human Capital & Campus Network Recommendations

- Although it is not possible to include every Colorado College community member in each decision-making process, cabinet members should search for ways to communicate the process by which decisions are made to increase transparency and trust.
- Communications via letters and emails lack context and are often met with criticism. Consider further investing in the technology and resources to produce more brief video communications from the administration that will convey a more personal tone.
- Maximize in-person events to re-energize the campus community to mental health services offered and any new renewed initiatives.

Become a National Model for Promoting Student Wellness through Innovation

Colorado College is well-positioned to become a national model for how a higher education institution can promote mental health and wellness among students, staff, and faculty. This could be accomplished, in part, by both offering and seeking funding opportunities to promote campus wellness. The College could identify faculty members whose teaching, research, and service interests overlap with campus wellness initiatives by offering small internal funding mechanisms to further support those efforts and integrate them with other ongoing efforts on campus. Additionally, the College could offer travel support—above and beyond current professional development support—for faculty and staff who present at professional conferences on the work Colorado College is undertaking related to wellness. The College could work with grant writers to search and apply for external funding opportunities focused on relevant aspects of wellness and

well-being. Targeted grants can be local, regional, and national to increase institutional recognition for work in this space.

To improve mental health services on campus, it is important to review all student leader and student employee training to ensure these key community stakeholders are equipped to communicate new messaging and not simply relay their personal experiences or information that has been indirectly communicated to them by other students. This could include training on how to identify students who may need support, how to refer students to appropriate resources, and how to de-stigmatize mental health issues on campus.

The College should intentionally discuss and communicate expectations of civility across campus. Campus leaders should set clear expectations and reinforce the type and tone of communication they would like to see exhibited daily. Additionally, the Colorado College Block Plan is one of the most innovative scheduling frameworks in higher education; this innovative schedule can be enhanced by infusing it with strategic components that dedicate time each week focused on expanding and improving well-being and social connections. This could include brief time for exercise, time for connecting with peers, and intentional brief wellness activities integrated to varying degrees into each Block. The Block Plan is already well-positioned as a space for community-based learning. It is the natural home for a nation-leading schedule of integrated communal wellness, particularly during 3½-week blocks that some students, faculty, and staff find particularly stressful.

Additional Innovation Recommendations

- Faculty and staff have created lists of on-campus and off-campus mental health resources. A 'resource exchange and consolidation' effort could help spread new ideas and offer more consistency in guidance and recommendations to students across the College.
- Build toward creating and cultivating Colorado College as the educational environment where each student becomes a lifelong consumer of the skills, knowledge, and mindset they will need to maintain their wellness and promote wellness in their communities.

- Cultivate a learning environment that promotes strong emotion regulation skills, stress management, and interpersonal skills.
- Encourage healthy risk-taking and low-stakes failures, where there are opportunities to fail, step back, adjust, try again, then succeed, all in a supportive context.
- Infuse these skill-building exercises into the curriculum and extend them to other student-centered experiences in the College community.

Concluding Remarks on Utilizing Existing College Assets

Overall, it is clear that Colorado College has many assets, and exceptional work is being done for students and the college community at large. There is strong interest and support on campus for developing and fostering a culture of wellness; solutions to the challenges of both today and tomorrow will come from within the College. Leadership should continue to identify ways to recognize and reinforce the love and deep connection students, faculty, staff, and administrators feel toward Colorado College. Continue empowering them, while providing them the space and flexibility to answer questions, make positive changes, and create new student, staff, and faculty-led initiatives.

The next steps are to prepare and empower the community for change. It is important to clearly define staff and faculty roles and responsibilities as they relate to student wellness in ways that highlight their expertise. However, each Colorado College community member has limits on their time and resources. One benefit of leveraging campus networks is that it reduces the burden of maintaining student wellness on any specific individual or unit. Consider developing faculty/staff/practitioner “roundtables” that would integrate multiple perspectives including direct student services, research, and pedagogy in a way that facilitates creativity and innovative approaches to caring for students in higher education.

In conclusion, we believe the recommendations in this report will help Colorado College create a more comprehensive and effective wellness plan that will reduce the risk of acute student crises in the future. This report is not a starting point, as

the campus conversations on wellness began long before this panel was assembled. Rather, we hope this report will serve as both a milestone and a signal identifying the need for clearer communication, policies, and procedures and outlining much-needed conversations about student wellness at Colorado College.