

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

An Introduction from the President

THE 2009 COLORADO COLLEGE STATE OF THE ROCKIES REPORT CARD

Welcome to Colorado College's sixth *State of the Rockies Report Card*. Continuing our yearly tradition, during the summer of 2008 some of our best undergraduate students completed innovative, peer-reviewed research that now comprises major sections of this *Report Card*. Along with the *Report Card*, Colorado College has sponsored a monthly fall/winter speakers series on "The Wild Rockies" and a Rockies Symposium with a unifying theme: "Visions of the Rockies in 50 Years: Will Our Children Thank Us?" During the Symposium we are proud to recognize our 2008-2009 Champions of the Rockies, Ed and Betsy Marston, for their reinvigoration of a stellar publication in the Rockies: *High Country News*.

This year's *Report Card* content is largely focused upon wildlife, one of the key natural treasures of the Rockies and a distinguishing aspect to the wildness and beauty we cherish. A related section evaluates the Wild and Scenic River system in the Rockies and how this federal act has protected certain reaches in the West compared to other federal designations and un-protected streams. A key variable for the Rockies' future is a growing population affecting our natural resources, and in this *Report Card* we consider the concentration of population growth within large metropolitan areas,

a demographic trend known as a "megapolitan" region. Rockies Snapshots look at preservation of the Rockies' historic past, crime and incarceration, and the degree of cooperation Rockies federal politicians devote to supporting our region's issues and concerns. As in previous *Report Cards*, we continue our "at a glance" Rockies Baseline: Vital Signs for a Region in Transition.

In prior years the *Report Cards* have examined how specific issues challenge the Rockies region and its natural, cultural, and historic importance. These have included regional energy issues, the condition of our national parks and health of our forests, expected impacts of climate change, success stories among our Native American peoples, toxic waste, creative occupations, and civic engagement. Media coverage has supplemented our annual conference and speakers series efforts, bringing regional, national and international attention to the issues studied and the results

found by our undergraduate researchers. We are proud to continue the decades' long tradition of Colorado College contributing to and strengthening our surrounding region's social, economic, and environmental qualities.



Colorado College has been defined and continually re-defined by the Rockies region. The college was founded by General William Jackson Palmer in 1874 with the intent to educate and “civilize” the regional population in the New England liberal arts tradition. Evolving programs and majors have been relevant to the region’s needs, from early day mining and engineering to our current regionally focused programs in environmental and southwest studies. Generations of students and professors have benefited from this magnificent region, using field trips and research to better understand disciplines such as geology, biology, economics, sociology, and the environment.

The college is a private, four-year liberal arts institution enrolling 1,900 students. Located in downtown Colorado Springs on a 94-acre campus at the base of Pikes Peak, we seek to fulfill our mission statement that speaks to our unique intellectual adventure:

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.

We pursue these goals by offering first and foremost an excellent undergraduate education in the liberal arts, taught through our unique course schedule known as the Block Plan, where students and faculty participate in a single course taught over three and a half weeks. In doing so we encourage a spirit of intellectual adventure, critical thinking, hands-on learning, and personal responsibility within an environment of small learning communities where education and life intertwine. Just as our Rockies region is challenged by numerous issues and problems, we challenge some of our strongest students to get involved in each year’s State of the Rockies Project, connecting them with the complex issues around us and preparing them for active careers and leadership.

Thank you for delving into this latest issue of our annual *Colorado College State of the Rockies Report Cards*. We strive to make each *Report Card* a comprehensive, balanced, accurate, and accessible annual statement on some of the key challenges and controversies facing the eight Rocky Mountain States: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and

Wyoming. Our students, staff, and many alumni live and recreate in this spectacularly beautiful region and thus are heavily vested in maintaining its vitality. We know many others have similar concerns and wish to protect the region’s communities, environment and economy. The Colorado College State of the Rockies Project is intended to make a continuing, positive regional difference that future generations will value.



Richard F. Celeste
President, Colorado College

