



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

An Introduction from the President of Colorado College

## **The 2013 Colorado College State of the Rockies Report Card**

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This 2013 Colorado College State of the Rockies *Report Card* is being published during the tenth year of the Project. Over the past decade our college has continued to celebrate the astounding region that shaped our beginnings and continues to be a distinctive aspect of what makes Colorado College unique. Since its inception, the Project and its annual cadre of stellar student researchers have done in-depth research on over 45 challenges that confront the Rockies region, roughly defined as the eight Mountain states, though for the past two years defined as the hydrologic boundary of the Colorado River Basin. Beyond CC, these “Rockies alumni” have already started to make their mark through initial jobs and internships, as well as advanced study at some of the nation’s best graduate institutions such as Columbia, Yale, and Duke. The earliest of these Rockies’ researchers are now in key conservation positions in places ranging from the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to non-profits like the Denver-based Center for Western Priorities.

Stimulated by our surroundings and 139-year history at the base of Pikes Peak, independent-minded students, sharp in the classroom and active in the outdoors, have helped us explore the region. Each year, summer research by students, supplemented by research completed during field trips around the Rockies, results in *Report Card* sections, which are often peer-reviewed. Monthly speakers connect the broader campus and community to current issues. An annual April Conference brings renowned experts to campus as the *Report Card* is

unveiled, topics are discussed, and conclusions are drawn.

For the last two years, several new dimensions have broadened the Project and its outreach. During the 2011-2012 school year, CC student researchers served as field explorers, carrying out a 1,700-mile “source to sea” kayak trip from the origins of the Green River in Wyoming down the Colorado and to the delta. In 2012, four field explorers traced the origins of the Colorado River near Rocky Mountain National Park to the end of the Grand Canyon National Park, conducting water quality studies and interviewing stakeholders along the way. Social media have been incorporated into these new dimensions. Original videos, blogs, Facebook posts, and speaking tours, such as a Fall 2012 lecture tour among the northeast Ivy League universities, immensely broaden our outreach in ways that speak to other age groups and constituencies.

A common thread runs through this decade-long stretch of Project activity. We have “kept our eye on the ball” with bright students as the centerpiece of topics selected, places studied, speakers brought to campus, and now social media outreach to youth who will quickly be the next generation of users and managers in the spectacular but fragile Rocky Mountain region. Proof of this strategy’s importance rests in the astounding students participating, the quality of their research and writing, and the growing recognition Colorado College now has as a key player in the environmental and socio-economic health of the Rockies Region. Eight years into the Rockies Project the Hewlett Foundation reached out to the

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college, asking that we be organizer and host of a first-ever annual Colorado College State of the Rockies Conservation in the West Survey. Now in its third year, this survey brings widespread regional and national attention to key challenges in the Rockies and registered voter attitudes about what matters in the region. We welcome both the recognition hosting this survey brings to CC and the fresh knowledge each year about attitudes towards conservation in the West.

The 2012-13 Rockies Project focus, for a second year, is the Colorado River Basin. This year's student researchers look at prospects for a "water friendly future" in the basin. Last year's basin investigation looked at an "agenda for use, restoration, and sustainability for the next generation." Those students briefed, in person, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper and Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar on five steps youth recommend in management of the basin. This year's student researchers led off from those five steps, studying how water can be managed wisely for agriculture, municipal and industrial, and energy uses. A recent major Bureau of Reclamation study of the demand-supply relationship in the basin until 2060 identifies a potential 3.2 million acre-foot per year shortage, indicating that "water friendly futures" are vital. Our students' work is current, relevant to major discussions in the water-scarce Rockies, and brings the voices of youth to the table.

The 2013 State of the Rockies Conference unveils this *Report Card* and once again brings to campus renowned

individuals with a focus on "Conservation in the Rockies: Issues of Citizen Science, Water Friendly Futures, and Winter Recreation." And for the fifth time we recognize an individual of immense importance to the Rockies, naming Former Governor Richard D. Lamm as the 2012-13 Champion of the Rockies. He joins a renowned roster of earlier "champions": Ted Turner, Ed and Betsy Marston, Terry Tempest Williams, and CC graduate Ken Salazar.

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.*

Even as we celebrate ten years of Rockies Project accomplishments, Colorado College is in the midst of a strategic planning effort driven by a mandate from our Trustees:

- elevate the college's identity as a highly-selective liberal arts institution*
- strengthen the academic program with an emphasis on engaged teaching and learning*
- explore how our unique location, character, and community can be leveraged to support the academic venture and promote a collective sense of place*
- evaluate and enhance institutional effectiveness and efficiency to better position the institution for evolving changes in higher education*

Two of the goals identified in the strategic planning process speak to the importance of our location in the Rockies:

**Goal #6** - Strengthen connections to the local community and greater Rocky Mountain region by acting as a confluence of ideas, perspectives and actions.

**Goal #9** - Establish Colorado College as the center for critical and civic engagement at the intersection of the Southwest and Rocky Mountain region by integrating and building upon existing programs and our location.

We are dedicated to keeping the Rockies region central to our identity and activities in coming years and decades.

I encourage you to join us as we recognize and celebrate the Rockies Project in its tenth year by looking through the rich student-written materials in this latest *Report Card*. I am confident that you will understand more of the immense and complex Colorado River Basin and its enormous challenges and that you will learn from the recommendations our students are making for a "water friendly future" in the Basin. 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.

Jill Tiefenthaler  
President  
Colorado College



Colorado College President Jill Tiefenthaler.