Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

2025 – 2030

UCCS

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Executive Summary

The University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), with a change in executive leadership, has completed an 18-month inaugural strategic enrollment planning (SEP) effort to guide the campus into a vibrant future. The planning process uses frames of innovative change, sustainability, and perseverance to generate a series of strategies that capitalize on existing resource strengths and suggest areas for investment to stabilize and build enrollment.

UCCS is at an inflection point, and the offered plan contains steps that will enrich the institution, moving the campus toward strategic action rather than reactionary practices. Over the course of the planning process, SEP partners used historical campus data, available market analysis, and state demographic data to identify program opportunities and obstacles.

From these efforts and analyses, the strategic enrollment management teams, with the help of the campus stakeholders, identified five areas of focus within five domains to construct an overall approach to direct enrollment planning. The strategic enrollment steering committee refers to these areas of focus or strategies as strategic imperatives. All imperatives are based on at least two core pillars from the UCCS Success 2030 Strategic Plan. The student experience domain serves as the anchor and support for all priorities. Although these strategies are not exhaustive, they are actionable and provide an immediate roadmap for change.

Table 1: Strategic Imperatives

The Student Experience

Strategic Imperative	Domain	Aligned UCCS Success 2030 Core Pillars
Improve UCCS Student Journeys	• Student Experience • Administrative Health • Fiscal Health	▶ Learning & Engagement ▶ Retention & Graduation ▶ Deliberate Investment
Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways	• Student Experience • Academic Health • Fiscal Health	▶ Unique Programs ▶ Retention & Graduation ▶ Financial Strength ▶ Partnership and Outreach
Reimagine Recruitment & Admissions	• Student Experience • Administrative Health • Fiscal Health	▶ Learning & Engagement ▶ Deliberate Investment ▶ Partnership & Outreach
Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage	• Student Experience • Fiscal Health • Market Position	▶ Learning & Engagement ▶ Financial Strength ▶ Deliberate Investment
Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care	• Student Experience • Administrative Health • Academic Health	▶ Learning & Engagement ▶ Retention & Graduation ▶ Deliberate Investment

Introduction

In October 2023, UCCS, with guidance from Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), initiated a strategic enrollment planning process to create a roadmap for stabilizing fiscal health while shifting the institutional focus forward to a culture dedicated to dynamic strategy, intentionality, and modernization.

This five-year guiding document, supported by our institutional Mission, Vision, and Values, identifies five strategic imperatives that inform process improvements and initiatives. The document provides a corresponding action plan to address the growing and changing needs of the existing and future Mountain Lion Family. Instead of comprehensive plans, the strategic imperatives invite units, divisions, and leadership to invest more resources and focus into a set of strategies fitting their unique strengths and challenges. Further, the approaches allow programs to see how their efforts contribute to the overall enrollment picture through incremental change to bring fresh energy to solve well-worn challenges.

Throughout the planning process, UCCS has experienced unprecedented change, which underscores the critical need for two seemingly incongruous principles: agility and operationalization. Student expectations and needs are evolving, and we are witnessing a new "destabilization of industry fundamentals[1]" where perceived value of education is shifting in concert with unequal sector competition. We know that education offers life-changing opportunities and getting that message to a wider audience is key to institutional success. Accomplishing that goal requires agility not only in messaging, but in our operations. The strategic imperatives offered will shift the institutional focus forward, embracing a new culture that values intentionality and innovation.

This plan identifies a range of areas to generate growth and to stabilize current enrollment and retention efforts, including affordability, competitive and coordinated marketing, improved student experiences, modern technology implementation, and innovative programming. The actions defined within create incremental gain, which, when aggregated, will make significant improvements to our key performance indicators. The data supporting the plans came from Institutional Research, Enrollment Management, existing enrollment and retention efforts at the unit level, and data collection efforts specifically designed by the Strategic Enrollment Management Steering Committee (SEMSC). Besides these internal resources, we utilized three external sources: a price benchmarking study, enrollment projection modeling, and a program gap analysis, which Lightcast provided in August 2024. The plan made use of a variety of UCCS resources, including existing governance structures, to gather information on how units currently work on enrollment challenges and solicited institutional knowledge to shape solutions.

Success of this plan relies on campus-wide adoption, data informed decision-making, and our capacity to implement rapid change. The Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Division (EMSA) and the Division of Academic Affairs commit to an annual review of these actions and initiatives. Annual action, initiative prioritization, and assessment will help ensure we are making progress towards our desired outcomes.

The committee trusts that the UCCS 2025 Strategic Enrollment Plan is a dynamic document that will grow and mature. A commitment to assess the strategy and actions here within will ensure this agile document stays relevant and in alignment with our institutional, system, and state priorities.

1] EAB (2023) Dynamic Strategy: How the best institutions stay agile and hard-wire self-sustaining goal achievement. Publication 38608.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

The Colorado Springs campus of the University of Colorado shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with selective admission standards.

The Colorado Springs campus shall offer liberal arts and sciences, business, engineering, health sciences, and teacher preparation undergraduate degree programs, and a selected number of master's and doctoral degree programs.

Vision Statement

UCCS, a premier comprehensive undergraduate and specialized graduate research university, provides students with academically rigorous and life-enriching experiences in a vibrant university community. We advance knowledge, integrate student learning with the spirit of discovery, and broaden access to higher education for the benefit of southern Colorado, the state, the nation, and the world.

Core Values

We see these values of excellence as our guiding principles:

Student Focus
We value students and never forget that students are our reason for being. We consider students and student outcomes in all the decisions we make. We provide a supportive environment in order to create lasting and significant educational experiences for every student.

Integration
We value the integration of teaching with research and creative work. Scholarship enriches teaching and teaching enriches scholarship. We see these activities as interdependent, allowing for synergies that benefit students, faculty, and all members of the university community.

Innovation
We value innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit. We are creative problem solvers in the classroom, in our research, and in our campus operations. We are catalysts for economic, social, and cultural changes in our communities. We provide opportunities for our community members to develop the skills of innovation and creative expression.

Collaboration
We value collaboration and teamwork as absolutely necessary for success in today's world. We model collaboration in our research, teaching, and campus operations. We actively seek opportunities to collaborate, build partnerships, and engage with external organizations.

Openness
We value comprehensiveness as a foundation for teaching and scholarship that prepares students, faculty, staff, and community members for both local and global multicultural realities. We provide an open, safe, and supportive campus environment based on mutual respect, engagement, and learning for everyone, including those from the full spectrum of backgrounds, social identities, abilities, cultures, perspectives, and university roles.

Dynamic Responsible Growth
We value dynamic growth while continuing to be financially responsible, academically sound, and environmentally sustainable. We meet the future with energy, enthusiasm, and a commitment to retaining a close, interconnected campus community.

Integrity
We value integrity and expect ethical behavior from each member of the campus community in all interactions. We build an environment where we treat each other with respect and appreciate each other's contributions.

Desired Outcomes

At the launch of the project, Chancellor, Jennifer Sobanet and the Executive Leadership Team identified three primary priorities and 15 areas for improvement. The desired outcomes from ELT include seven priorities related to growth, four priorities related to fiscal health, and four priorities connected to brand awareness.

Growth Priorities

1. Expand recruitment pool.

2. Strategic and sustainable enrollment growth to represent the communities of Colorado.

3. Graduate student enrollment growth.

4. Online student credit hour growth.

5. Focus on community and affinity to reduce disparity in academic performance.

6. Increased persistence, retention, and completion rates.

7. Faculty, staff, and facilities expansion to support strategic sustainable growth.

Fiscal Priorities

1. Stable revenue growth.

2. Boost scholarship and financial aid package offerings to increase competitiveness.

3. Manage and acquire institutional aid.

4. Invest in programming (both academic and support), which has a measurable impact on enrollment growth and student success.

Brand Awareness and Reputation

1. Improvements and growth in brand development, marketing activity, and web traffic.

2. Expanded business partnerships.

3. Alumni engagement and reengagement.

4. Student career readiness.

Planning Structure, Process, and Planning Assumptions

Planning Structure

The design of the reporting and planning structure of the SEP was based on lessons learned through prior experience, informed by data, and focused on intentional campus-wide inclusivity. Work groups took information from campus-wide surveys, information sessions, and their day-to-day work expertise to craft priorities. The structure in figure 1 ensures collaboration across campus. Descriptions of committee structure and responsibilities are in tables 4 and 5.

SEP workgroups developed areas of focus by understanding the current environment through SWOT analyses, and situational analyses which informed action plans.

Figure 1: Advisory Council Structure for Strategic Enrollment Planning

Strategic Enrollment Plan Organizational Structure

Executive Leadership Team
Final decision maker, take into account recommendedations of council.

ACSEP - Enrollment Council
Oversees the management of the plan once written, decision makers and implementation.

ACSEP - Council Committees
Implement and manage the priorities of the work groups once the plan is written.

SEP Steering Committee
Lead the writing of the plan, including priorities and strategy. Manage the workgroups. *Temporary.*

SEP Work Groups
SMEs - take into account campus voices and priorities - perform research. *Temporary.*

Table 2: SEP Workgroups

Strategic Enrollment Planning Workgroups

Workgroup	Area of Focus
Academic Areas	Using the existing governance structure, academic areas including two team leads gathered information from the Academic Deans and Associate Dean Councils and Faculty Assembly to identify priorities and investment strategies to enhance academic experiences across campus.
Data Team	Representatives from the Office of Institutional Research and Enrollment Management worked with each workgroup, ACSEP, and RNL to provide data, context, and analysis to support all planning activities.
Online and Graduate Student Recruitment and Marketing	Connecting campus resources related to communication and online education advancement, this group, including representatives with experience with online education at multiple levels, worked to spotlight strategies from existing UCCS online programing and suggested new pathways to strengthen and expand online education. Representation from the Graduate School, Extended Studies, and academic programs were solicited to reflect current growth in graduate student enrollment.
Student Financial Aid and Fiscal Health	Using the UCCS student population demographics, the subcommittee focused on identifying and creating three areas of focus for student aid opportunities to be explored for financial aid gift aid programs. The subcommittee concentrated on a clearer tuition rate structure to simplify tuition rates to assist students with clear expectations of their cost of education and opportunities to better illustrate to prospective students the cost of attending UCCS for marketing purposes.
Student Success	Capitalizing on the existing retention work occurring on campus, representation for the existing Retention and Graduate Subcommittee and a variety of Student Affairs units worked to incorporate the ongoing efforts from that team to recommend strategies that connected to the broader campus goals.
Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Marketing	Unit leaders spanning campus level enrollment, communication, and consulting program level representatives whose role involves direct engagement in undergraduate recruitment activity. This group sought ways to expedite coordination between campus and program level efforts to create effective brand strategy for the undergraduate market.

Workgroups presented their priorities and action plans to the SEP Steering Committee for review and feedback. The Advisory Council for Strategic Enrollment Planning (ACSEP) oversees plan progress and management.

Table 3: Committee Structure

Outline of the Committee Structure with Committee Responsibilities

Advisory Council for Strategic Enrollment Planning (ACSEP): The Council, composed of campus leaders, guides and manages the progress of the effort. They provide oversight for the steering committee and other committees established under this organizational structure.	**Responsibilities**
	Strategic oversight and approval–manage and oversee the new plan.
	Evaluate ongoing enrollment trends, activities, and initiatives.
	Prioritize funding, strategy, and actions in collaboration with campus leadership.
	Envision the implementation and execution of the plan strategies.
SEP Steering Committee (SEPSC): Committee members manage day-to-day plan details. SEPSC completed the initial planning and prioritization process. This committee is the liaison between the campus community and the council/executive leadership. The structure helps with campus-wide information accessibility, plan stewardship, and communication. SEPSC is a temporary group; it will transform after the planning process is complete. Strategy ideation is the committee's primary charge.	**Responsibilities**
	Make recommendations to the executive leadership team, Academic Deans, and the Advisory Council.
	Prioritize strategies to guide plan management to implementation and assessment.
	Serve as campus-wide project ambassadors.
	Conduits for communication throughout the process.
Strategic Enrollment Planning Working Groups: The work groups are the subject matter experts in their functional areas. The groups comprise representatives from across the institution and include both faculty and staff. The average work group has 6-8 members, including 2 co-chairs from the Steering Committee. The co-chairs actively recruited group members with expertise to support the planning efforts.	**Responsibilities**
	Provide analysis and recommendations regarding the prioritization of needs to the ACSEP.
	Provide data-informed documentation to the ACSEP including SWOT analysis, situational analysis, action plans, and budget calculations.
	Act as subject experts for their functional areas to inform current processes and gaps.
	Provide historical context, along with outside entities, for the UCCS market position.

Planning Process

Overview

Under the guidance of the RNL model outlined in "Strategic Enrollment Planning, A Dynamic Collaboration," the initial project lead defined the planning structure, understanding that identifying ideal institutional outcomes and developing a timeline for plan delivery builds the foundation of the planning process. The steering committee and a consultant from RNL added additional elements to the process. After the foundation of the plan was complete, additional elements of the process, which encompassed committee structure and membership development, and working group data collection efforts, began.

Fall 2025 enrollment outcomes are a critical priority for campus sustainability; therefore, the committees did not wait to begin implementation for several initiatives. Groundwork for formal implementation began before the fall semester of 2024.

Supplements to the Planning Process

Communication:

Changing campus-wide perception about the role of enrollment management and how it relates to student success is an overarching division goal. Early in 2023, the enrollment management team discovered that there is a need for increased communication concerning admissions and recruitment business processes. To address the information gap and promote adoption of strategy, the steering committee committed to a four-pronged communication approach, including personal outreach, information sessions, digital communication, and website publication.

Table 4: Communication Plan

Communication Plan

Information Sessions	Digital Communication	SEP Website
Personal Outreach from the All-Committee Members to Solicit Feedback and Serve as Plan Advocates		
Governance Group Outreach	Campus Informational Email	Steering Committee Updates
Campus-wide Info Sessions	Status Updates	Frequently Asked Questions
Cascading Communications	Listserv & Campus Publications	KPIs and Metrics

Table 5: Planning Timeline

Strategic Enrollment Planning Timeline
Initiated: September 2023

1

Sep - Dec 2023

- Project launch
- Research

2

Jan - May 2024

- Planning
- Process shared with campus

3

Jun 2024

- Define goals & KPIs
- Initiated writing

4

Jul 2024

- 1st draft to Executive Leadership
- Implementation plan

5

Aug - Sep 2024

- Writing & research continue
- Budgeting for initiatives

6

Oct 2024

- Finalize implementation plan
- Draft to Chancellor review

7

Nov 2024

- Draft to CU President for review
- Draft to Deans

8

Dec 2024

- Present to President Todd Saliman
- Open for comment

9

Apr 2025
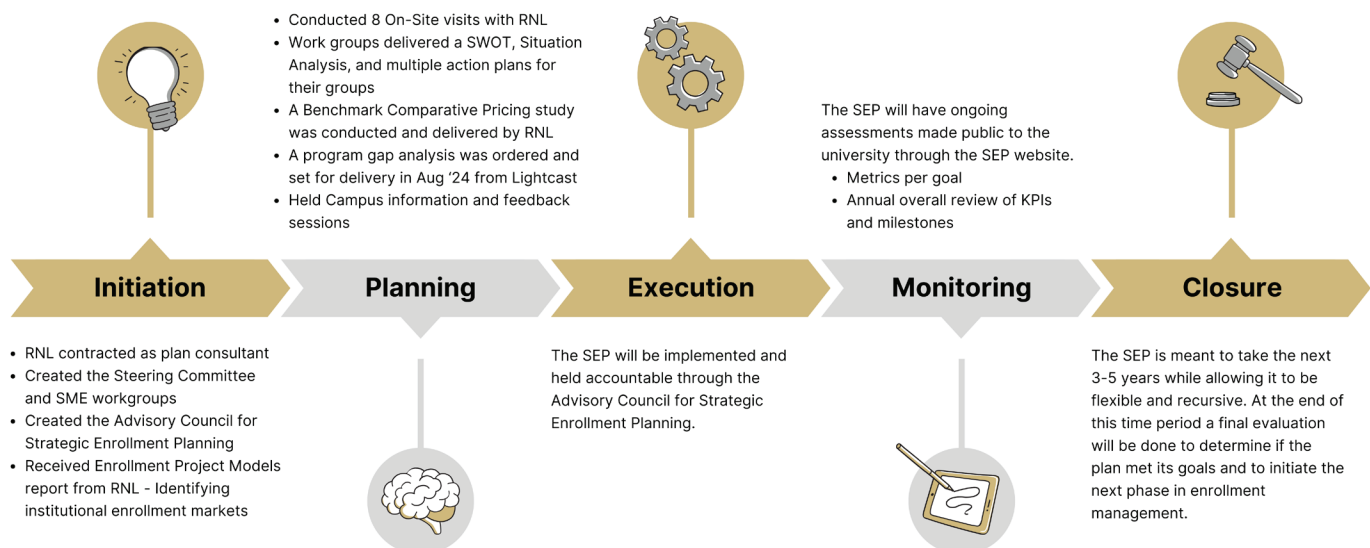
- Campus launch implementation

Planning Assumptions

The planning assumptions, along with our institutional priorities, guided the steering committee's actions as they developed their priorities and action plans. The expertise of Dr. James Loftus (RNL) guided assumptions 1-4. The committee developed assumptions 5-8.

1. UCCS's mission, vision, and strategic plan will serve as the foundation for our work in strategy and action plan development.

2. Our primary focus for strategies and tactics will be on holistic student enrollment that encompasses our first contact with a prospective student through graduation to alumni status.

3. Carnegie classifications and student selectivity for the admissions process will not change.

4. All campus constituents recognize that strategies and action plans may require either onetime funding or ongoing investment to realize success.

5. Stakeholders, with input and guidance from the RNL Consultant, will complete the planning process and the SEP plan.

6. The implementation and success of the plan is a campus-wide endeavor.

7. The plan is realistic, actionable, and recursive. The plan incorporates flexibility to accommodate changing campus priorities.

8. Recommendation: ACSEP will use the plan as a guiding document to inform annual and longer-term enrollment strategies and goals.

Figure 2: Planning Infographic

Project Planning Process

Initiation
- Conducted 8 On-Site visits with RNL
- Work groups delivered a SWOT, Situation Analysis, and multiple action plans for their groups
- A Benchmark Comparative Pricing study was conducted and delivered by RNL
- A program gap analysis was ordered and set for delivery in Aug '24 from Lightcast
- Held Campus information and feedback sessions

Initiation (below):
- RNL contracted as plan consultant
- Created the Steering Committee and SME workgroups
- Created the Advisory Council for Strategic Enrollment Planning
- Received Enrollment Project Models report from RNL - Identifying institutional enrollment markets

Planning

Execution
The SEP will be implemented and held accountable through the Advisory Council for Strategic Enrollment Planning.

Monitoring
The SEP will have ongoing assessments made public to the university through the SEP website.
- Metrics per goal
- Annual overall review of KPIs and milestones

Closure
The SEP is meant to take the next 3-5 years while allowing it to be flexible and recursive. At the end of this time period a final evaluation will be done to determine if the plan met its goals and to initiate the next phase in enrollment management.

Situational Analysis Summary

The SEP workgroups conducted situation analyses (SA) for all areas of interest. The SA summary offers a snapshot of the institution's current position in the sector. The data supports the need for a formalized strategic enrollment plan to guide operational adjustments and highlights the strategic imperatives identified in each area of study. For the summary, we have focused on the enrollment funnel, new students, market share, affordability, and the holistic student experience.

Overall Enrollment

UCCS is a public research university, with a Carnegie classification of R2: a doctoral institution with high research activity, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. As part of the University of Colorado System, UCCS provides a range of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs with a high undergraduate enrollment profile. The university values small class sizes with student access to faculty and emphasizes research-focused degree programs and experiential learning.

In 2000, the University of Colorado Board of Regents designated UCCS as the growth campus of the University of Colorado System. The university had grown from a small satellite campus of the University of Colorado Boulder with an enrollment of 1,282 students in 1965 to a vibrant campus of 6,632 students in 2000. From 2000 forward, the campus grew to its peak of 12,572 students in 2018. In 2019, we experienced a downturn, and then in March 2020, the

World Health Organization declared that the SARS-CoV-2 virus had caused a global pandemic. From 2018 to today, the institution experienced an enrollment decrease of -3.8%. This decline brought enrollment back to pre-2013 levels with post-2023 expenses.

The campus is showing signs of stabilization. Over the past two years, new graduate student enrollment has increased, and new undergraduate student enrollment is also growing, partly due to a rise in transfer and non-traditional student enrollment. From fall 2023 to fall 2024, we saw a +10.1% increase in transfer students and a +27% increase in students who had stopped out and were readmitted after three or more semesters of inactivity. Additionally, the percentage of undergraduates aged 30 or older increased from 15.3% in fall 2019 to 18% in fall 2024. In 2024, 33.5% of our undergraduate population was 25 years of age or older.

Figure 3: Fall End of Term Enrollment, 2015 to 2023
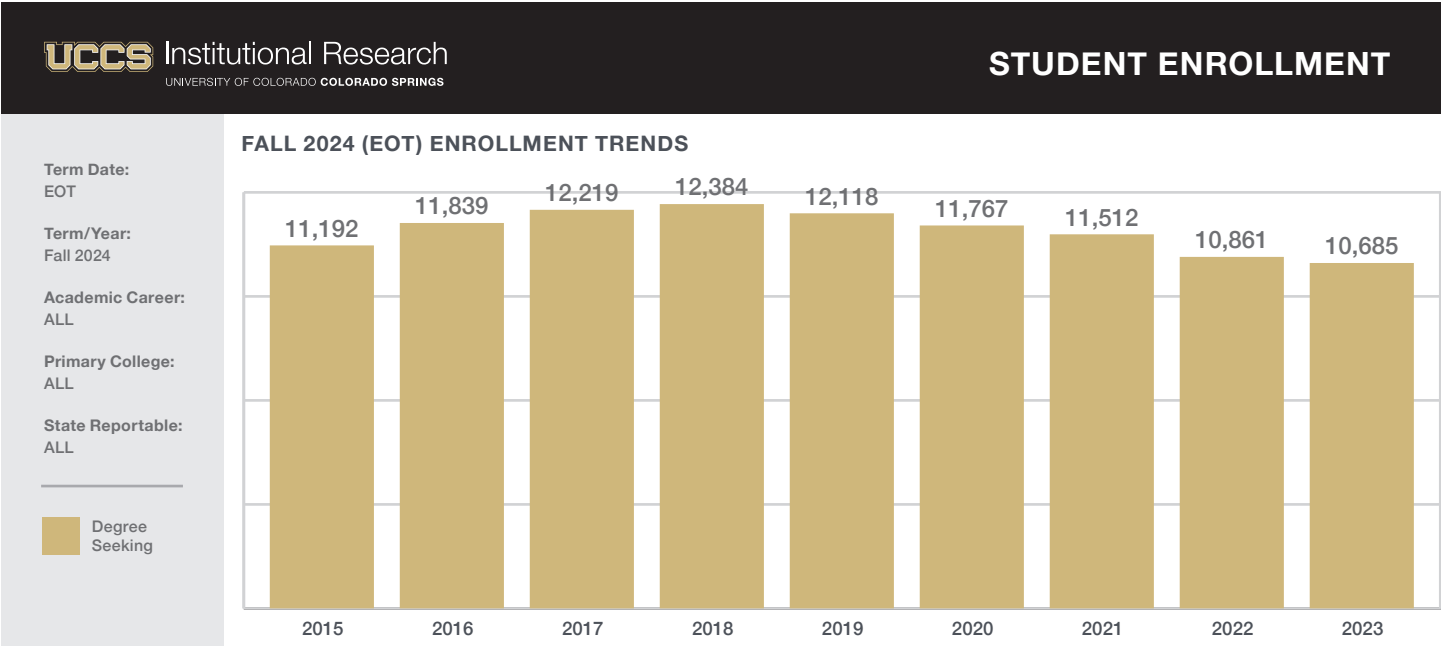
Internal Environment

Institutional Strengths:

Academic Programs: UCCS offers a wide range of academic programs through six specialized colleges: the College of Business and Administration, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and the College of Public Service. Supporting these colleges, the Kraemer Family Library and the Graduate School provide innovative programming and resources that enhance academic offerings across the institution.

UCCS's programmatic strengths include over 70 undergraduate and graduate programs encompassing expanding health science programs, a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), growing specialties in cybersecurity, teacher education, arts and humanities, business, and public service. Additionally, UCCS has evolved from a comprehensive master's large institution to Carnegie high research (R2) university, which shows successful academic doctoral programming and accomplished sponsored research capabilities.

Community Engagement: UCCS has fostered deep, longstanding partnerships with the local community and businesses since its founding in 1965. Dave Packard of Hewlett-Packard, guided by a vision to support community employment needs and provide HP's local workforce with access to graduate education, advocated to launch UCCS as a business and engineering satellite of CU Boulder. The university has honored these roots by adapting to developing community demands. A notable example is the 1997 merger with Beth-El College of Nursing, achieved through a community referendum. Recent programs in Exercise Science, Cybersecurity, Social Work, and Real Estate Management further underscore UCCS's dedication to serving the region. We craft our curricula to inspire a lasting passion for community engagement in future generations, giving students meaningful opportunities. Through collaborative partnerships, we offer experiential learning, internships, and civic engagement experiences that enrich education, strengthen connections, and prepare students for successful careers.

Student Body: The university has a varied student population, which enhances the learning environment, increases leadership skills, and provides a broad view of unique experiences, all preparing students for today's workforce and an active civic life.

Potential Challenges:

Fiscal Constraints: UCCS faces challenges related to state funding, which can limit resources for investment and infrastructure improvements. In January 2023, Colorado ranked 49th in spending[1] per student per full-time equivalency (FTE). In 2022, Colorado's support for higher education per FTE was $5,977, which was well below the national average of $8,979[2]. The university receives 14% of their total budget from state funding. Additionally, the campus receives a much smaller portion of the CU budget than the other CU campuses. In 2024, the Regents approved a $6.3 billion budget for the entire system. UCCS was allocated 5.7% of that budget, while CU Denver received 6.25%, Anschutz received 47.7%, and Boulder received 38.9%. This allocation is based on enrollment and performance metrics included in the State's financial allocation model. UCCS has fewer students, lower retention, lower graduation rates and fewer low income, first generation, and students of color than our sister campuses. The volatility and long-term decline in the State's support of UCCS coupled with our smaller student population and recent, five-year -13.8% decline in enrollment, make it difficult for the university to invest in initiatives that provide the same level of services for students that other Colorado public universities and colleges have historically offered.

Capacity: In recent years, rising costs and the growing post-pandemic demand for student support have made it increasingly difficult to maintain our high standards of service. Course capacity is becoming a critical issue. Most notably, post-pandemic, offerings for courses for over 40 students in size have decreased by -45.6% and course sections with enrollments of 2 to 9 have increased +10.78%. Decreasing course sizes increase the cost of instruction and limit student progression because of course seat availability.

Although the average course section size has remained at 17.9 students from 2019 to 2024, the faculty-to-student ratio has decreased from 17:1 in 2019 to 16:1 in 2023-24. Additionally, the number of course sections offered has decreased by -11.5%[3]. Most notably, post-pandemic, offerings for courses with over 40 students have plummeted by -45.6%, while sections with enrollments of 2 to 9 students have increased by +10.78%. This shift towards smaller course sizes increases the cost of instruction and limits student progression due to reduced course seat availability.

Currently, 82% of our in-person coursework is offered from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Thursday. In recent years, the

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1   https://shef.sheeo.org/report/#report-highlights
2   https://ncses.nsf.gov/indicators/states/indicator/state-support-for-higher-education-per-fte-student
3   UCCS Common Data Set 2019-2020 and 2023-2024

number of single-section courses has surged by +17%. This shift towards more small course offerings significantly impacts course scheduling. Accreditation guidelines, room capacity, and compact scheduling limit the Registrar's ability to find space for additional credit-hour production without changing scheduling blocks, providing additional course modalities, increasing course caps, or creating guidelines for course fill rates.

Fiscal pressures such as inflation and rising costs of wages and benefits are pushing us to do more with less funding. Additionally, the decline in student preparation due to pandemic disruptions in K-12 learning, coupled with a surge in related mental health challenges, has led to faculty and staff experiencing emotional exhaustion and burnout from providing comprehensive student support. These academic struggles are a leading cause of student stress, which in turn increases the demand for wellness services, counseling, and disability service centers. As we welcome under-prepared incoming cohorts over the next six years, faculty are also feeling the burden of expanded academic accommodation requests and the pressure to provide academic support.

Brand Recognition:

Brand recognition for UCCS is primarily a statewide issue within Colorado, but it also has national consequences.

In Colorado (Statewide Issue), there are three areas where brand recognition within the state is a challenge: competition with CU campuses, regional awareness, and target markets. Within the state, UCCS struggles to distinguish itself from the other University of Colorado campuses (CU Boulder, CU Denver, CU Anschutz). These larger campuses often receive more visibility, funding, and attention, overshadowing UCCS. Regionally, while UCCS has strong recognition in Colorado Springs and some surrounding areas, it lacks the same level of awareness in other Colorado regions, such as the Denver metro area and northern Colorado. Our target markets within counties like El Paso, Pueblo, and Weld show growth opportunities, but we must enhance our reputation and appeal to attract students from these markets effectively.

Nationally, there are broader implications. We have a limited national presence because of falling U.S. News and World Report Rankings. Without national advertising, UCCS has relatively little visibility outside Colorado, this reduces our ability to attract out-of-state and international students. Nationally, UCCS may be seen as a regional campus within the CU system rather than a distinct institution. The lack of brand differentiation compared to CU Boulder (Go Buffs!), or CU Denver makes it harder to compete with other universities across the U.S.

Facilities: Although the campus has invested in state-of-the-art facilities over the last 20 years, some campus facilities, specifically housing accommodations for first-time first-year students, need renovation. There are three private college housing complexes within walking distance of campus that have amenities which include air conditioning, reserved parking, outdoor swimming pools, and kitchens. Because we are a public institution, we have been conservative in providing similar amenities. For example, first-year housing does not have cooking facilities or air conditioning.

Our campus property currently covers 550 acres of beautiful land. Instructional space covers roughly 2.4 miles. It is a 55-minute walk from University Hall to the ENT Center for the Arts. Though the walk is pretty, it limits a student's ability to schedule coursework across buildings. And at the margins, there is a lack of comfortable and welcoming spaces for gathering or studying. The library has changed their space to engage students; however, these new library spaces are the exception rather than the rule. Students and faculty can find it difficult to buy a cup of coffee or visit a computer lab during late evening classes if they have scheduled coursework too far away from the central campus center.

Violence Disruption: In the spring semester, 2024, the institution experienced a tragic campus event in residence life, which created negative news and questions about campus safety. The frequent reminders from news coverage may be one variable discouraging enrollment of both new and continuing students. In the fall of 2024 following the incident, we experienced a -30% decrease in the fill rate for residence life and -7.3% decrease in new freshman enrollments.

External Environment

Opportunities:

Growing Demand for Flexible Online Education: Increasing demand for flexible online, HyFlex, and hybrid learning formats creates the opportunity to expand online offerings and flexible modalities to reach an expanding audience.

Partnerships and Collaborations: There are opportunities to establish new partnerships with local, national, and international businesses, organizations, and institutions to enrich and expand academic offerings, research opportunities and co-curricular programs while providing students with valuable career-ready skills.

Location: The university benefits from its location in Colorado Springs, a city known for natural beauty and an outdoor lifestyle. Proximity to major cities provides close access to big city amenities. Both the low crime rate and friendly atmosphere are all reasons the city often appears in "best places" in the U.S. to live lists[4]. The metro area has a growing job market in defense, aerospace, healthcare, and technology sectors, and a large presence of non-profit organizations, which provide ample opportunities for internships and service learning. These amenities can be a draw for students interested in an active high-quality lifestyle.

Expanding Regional Influence: As the city of Colorado Springs continues to grow and develop, UCCS has an opportunity to envision and promote the region's economic, educational, and talent development.

Potential Challenges:

Higher education has undergone dramatic changes in the past five years. Changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting demographics, economic pressures, and societal trends will require creative and dynamic solutioning if we expect to cultivate institutional growth. The sector has been managing demographic changes and cost pressures over the last decade; however, we are facing new challenges with the rise of the mental health crisis, reduced academic preparedness, public skepticism about both the value and cost of higher education, increasing legislative mandates, and intensified competition. Though many pressures exist, we see the primary drivers of change as ambivalence or reduced consumption of higher education paired with increased supply; the unprecedented fiscal and emotional support required to address student readiness and wellness, and the potential of the polarization of the political landscape that will shape federal and state policy[5].

Competitive Environment: The higher education market is highly competitive, with institutions competing for the same students. We face competition from both in-state and out-of-state universities, especially as tuition prices climb and admissions requirements drop. Our competitors can often offer higher financial aid support, a wider range of programming, and comprehensive student resources. When Pikes Peak State College began offering the RN-to Bachelor of Nursing degree in 2019, we experienced a steep decrease in undergraduate nursing majors. Enrollment in our undergraduate nursing program has declined -20.7% between 2020 and 2024, Pikes Peak State College announced that they will offer a Bachelor of Applied Science in Cybersecurity (BAS). The UCCS BA in Computer Science (CS-BA) is one of our high demand programs. It has more than quadrupled in size since 2020. We expect the PPSC low-cost BAS to decrease our enrollment in the CS-BA.

Economic Factors: Economic downturns or fluctuations in state funding affect enrollment numbers and financial stability. We know that rising tuition costs and student debt concerns affect student recruitment, student persistence and completion. Enrollment declines, rising personnel costs, and inflation create resource constraints for most institutions. Education Advisory Board (EAB) calls this environmental shift an "existential change"[6] .

State initiatives meant to increase access to higher education often create fiscal institutional deficits. Colorado's "Free Application Day" is a good example, as the state did not reimburse institutions for lost revenue, and the initiative resulted in an increased number of applications. The Common Application, designed to simplify

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4   https://realestate.usnews.com/places/colorado/colorado-springs
5   https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/latest-trends-in-higher-education.html
6   https://eab.com/resources/blog/strategy-blog/reckoning-with-relevance-eabs-state-of-the-sector/

the college application process, has exacerbated this issue. In Colorado, for the 2014-15 academic year, students submitted 10,169 applications, by 2023-2024, that number had almost tripled to 29,783. Admissions operations are processing approximately +192.3% more applications through just the Common App than they were doing 8 years ago, with fewer resources. Significant increases in application volume not only affect the admissions processing operation, but "can add to downward price pressures if families cross-shop different financial aid offers, and it can make it harder to predict how many applicants will show up in the fall after they're admitted" (Selzer, 2022).

Changing Demographics: Declining high school graduation rates caused by the great recession's low birth rates, fewer students choosing college, and changes in student needs impact our pool student population. Demographers have identified decreases in the 15-19-year-old population in the United States of "6.5% from its peak in 2021 to a low point in 2032"[7]. The waning population, combined with increasing competition and reductions in college consumption, will likely result in additional losses to overall enrollment for first-time first-year students.

Because of current sentiments questioning the value of a college education, debt aversion, and public perceptions of increased cost of attendance, national organizations are reporting reduced consumption of higher education[8]. Not only are we seeing a smaller population of college-age students due to declining birth rates and increasing numbers of high school dropouts[9], but the smaller populations are opting out of college.

College student readiness has undergone significant changes since the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by academic, social, and mental health challenges. Post-pandemic, we are observing marked changes in student behavior that EAB is calling "the student readiness crisis." Students are entering college with learning gaps caused by the swift transition to remote learning and prolonged absences experienced during the pandemic. Experts estimate these gaps will continue until 2030, when the youngest students who experienced the pandemic during their school years begin college. Besides learning losses, the pandemic intensified stress, anxiety, and left potential students with fewer tools to manage in-person interactions. A UCLA study found, over "90% of college students reported struggling with pandemic-related stressors, including isolation and financial hardships", which left them "ill-equipped to succeed" (Hotez et al., 2021). The combination of reduced social and emotional readiness and increased need for mental health services is troubling, as health professionals observe increased rates of depression, anxiety, non-suicidal self-injury, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and substance abuse, which college stressors can worsen. The cost of supporting this new population will only grow as enrollment volume increases.

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7 https://eab.com/resources/blog/strategy-blog/cost-control-strategies-rightsize-your-university/
8 https://eab.com/resources/blog/enrollment-blog/the-demographic-cliff-is-already-here-and-its-about-to-get-worse/
9 Colorado's high school dropout rate increase from 1.8% in 2020-21 to 2.1% in 2022-23. https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/dropoutvisual2223

Projected Market Pipeline–Applicant Pool

First-Time First-Year Students

UCCS was primarily a commuter campus until 1995, when it broke ground on the first residence halls. Incoming undergraduate student cohorts were a mix of transfer students (45%) and first-time first-year students (55%). This ratio changed in 2013 as our first-time first-year enrollment rose. In the fall semester of 2017, we had the largest incoming class of first-time first-year students (N=2,043). After this peak, this student population contracted. There has been a 19.53% percent change in our fall first-time first-year enrolling cohort size between 2017 and 2024 (N= 2043 to 1644).

RNL created an Enrollment Projection Model in 2023 to explore the composition of the UCCS market. Key findings show that 75% of our first-time first-year students originate in 12 counties (table 6). El Paso County, our largest market, is showing a projected high school population decrease of -16.7% between 2020 and 2026. If we maintain our market share, we should see a significant decrease in freshman enrollment. However, we can address this decrease by both recruiting in smaller counties that are growing (Adams, Pueblo, & Weld Counties) and increasing our market share in primary markets, El Paso County, CO and Maricopa County, AZ. Unified marketing and brand recognition will help expand our historical reach.

Table 6: Projected First-Time First-Year Population

Location	High School Seniors					
Market	**2020-21**	**2021-22**	**2022 - 23**	**2023 - 24**	**2024 - 25**	**2025 - 26**
El Paso, CO	12,092	12,173	10,101	10,260	10,223	10,078
Douglas, CO	5,149	5,647	5,192	5,140	5,055	4,777
Arapahoe, CO	9,648	9,715	9,347	9,538	9,330	9,371
Jefferson, CO	6,713	6,477	6,288	6,072	6,045	5,796
Adams, CO	6,363	6,363	6,361	6,366	6,447	6,577
Pueblo, CO	1,825	1,760	1,773	1,845	1,918	2,135
Weld, CO	3,072	3,265	3,394	3,373	3,507	3,546
Boulder, CO	4,964	5,182	5,040	5,242	5,147	4,968
Teller, CO	213	167	158	158	157	117
Larimer, CO	3,739	3,825	3,554	3,643	3,663	3,557
Maricopa, AZ	62,347	64,149	60,203	60,717	62,444	61,838
Bexar, TX	22,892	22,544	22,538	21,525	23,401	21,227
Other DOM.	3,521,626	3,524,945	3,484,627	3,473,955	3,598,836	3,430,358
TOTAL	**3,660,643**	**3,666,212**	**3,618,575**	**3,607,833**	**3,736,173**	**3,564,345**

Transfer Students

The projected transfer population available in 2025-2026 decreases in the majority of our primary markets (table 7). This is troubling because 72% of UCCS 2023 Transfer Student enrollment came from just 7 counties. However, in 2021, 65% of our Transfer students originated from El Paso County. From 2021 to 2022, we experienced a -25.56% decrease in our enrollment and from 2022 to 2023 we experienced a -25.81% decrease in enrollment from El Paso County. Recovering this primary market is critical, as our market share elsewhere is too small to help shift the yield to maintain flat enrollment.

Table 7: Projected Transfer Population

Location	Transfer Population					
Market	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
El Paso, CO	4,646	4,802	4,909	4,748	4,109	4,156
Douglas, CO	2,061	2,058	2,131	2,248	2,100	2,075
Arapahoe, CO	3,688	3,813	3,916	3,904	3,805	3,847
Jefferson, CO	2,692	2,665	2,700	2,607	2,529	2,460
Pueblo, CO	723	716	735	715	726	755
Adams, CO	2,524	2,578	2,579	2,579	2,579	2,588
Teller, CO	80	77	82	67	64	63
Fremont, CO	148	139	127	114	127	128
Boulder, CO	1,949	2,000	2,032	2,087	2,061	2,117
Weld, CO	1,268	1,288	1,263	1,334	1,374	1,378
Maricopa, AZ	24,238	24,795	25,432	25,644	24,447	24,765
Otero, CO	84	88	100	96	92	86
Other Counties	20,032	20,062	19,885	19,840	19,530	19,741
TOTAL:	64,133	65,081	65,891	65,983	63,543	64,159

Post-traditional Students

Post-traditional is defined as an undergraduate greater than 24 years, and a graduate greater than 28 years of age. Approximately 93% of adult enrollment comes from 12 counties presented in table 8. In 2023, El Paso County accounted for 82% of our graduate enrollment. The projection shows that El Paso County's adult population will contract 2% between 2020 and 2026; however, several counties are showing projected increases (e.g., Pueblo, Douglas, Adams, Fremont, Elbert, and Weld). It is important not to overlook these smaller counties as potential sources of both undergraduate and graduate growth.

Table 8: Projected Graduate Student Population

Location	Graduate Population						
Market	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
El Paso, CO	631,537	629,246	627,381	625,131	622,899	620,651	618,443
Pueblo, CO	137,326	138,751	139,761	140,608	141,482	142,468	143,395
Douglas, CO	249,978	259,255	267,525	275,832	283,898	291,865	299,707
Arapahoe, CO	525,835	528,007	529,668	530,779	531,836	532,905	533,755
Jefferson, CO	293,600	296,216	298,946	301,384	303,931	306,516	309,076
Boulder, CO	405,122	408,492	412,039	415,644	419,168	422,793	426,451
Teller, CO	16,495	16,504	16,336	16,187	16,059	15,956	15,861
Larimer, CO	498,994	499,509	500,417	500,878	501,183	501,418	501,324
Adams, CO	316,108	324,045	331,309	338,488	345,283	351,844	358,342
Elbert, CO	18,125	18,481	18,439	18,388	18,373	18,384	18,403
Fremont, CO	42,713	43,333	44,026	44,638	45,251	45,881	46,468
Weld, CO	268,178	270,399	273,923	277,048	279,972	282,890	285,669
Other counties	1,342,649	1,360,184	1,375,949	1,390,738	1,405,214	1,419,669	1,433,365
TOTAL:	**4,746,660**	**4,792,422**	**4,835,719**	**4,875,741**	**4,914,548**	**4,953,240**	**4,990,257**

Enrollment Funnel

The enrollment funnel is an indicator of the market share and health of the overall admissions process. The front end of the funnel at the applicant stage reflects interest in academic programs and is largely, for first-time first-year students, a culmination of the relationships cultivated by Admission and Recruitment, the Pre-collegiate Development Office, concurrent and dual enrollment opportunities and community outreach to local P-12 school districts. Relationship building begins as early as middle school. The admitted population reflects the qualification of the student in relation to our academic admissions requirements, state regulations, and institutional selectivity. Enrollment, in a simplified form, directly results from both the applicant pool and the admitted pool, our ability to offer competitive pricing or financial aid, and student/institutional fit.

First-time first-year student enrollment has dropped from the fall of 2018 to the fall of 2023. However, statistically, the fall 2018 admission year caused the variation in enrollment. Average first-time enrollment between 2019 and 2023 is 1,773. Although enrollment in the first-year funnel is relatively flat, applications and admits have a much greater variance. This difference shows that for growth, we need to invest in the cultivation of prospects through strategic name buys, expand our recruitment territories, and assess our admissions criteria in relation to our competition.

The transfer student funnel is less complex than the first-time first-year funnel. From 2018 to 2023, enrollments depend heavily on the number of students admitted into the institution. To generate growth, we need to close the gap between admits and enrollments, increase the front end of the funnel, and create an intentional relationship with our applicants early in their community college career. What we see, in figure 5, is an opportunity. We currently convert 45%, on average, of our transfer admits to enrollment. We have room to increase that conversion rate by double-digits with investments across the transfer student journey and provide opportunities for pre-application engagement.

The graduate enrollment funnel shows a better ratio of admission to enrollment than the undergraduate funnels. With over 60% historic conversion rate, it is unlikely that yield will increase. However, as we see student interest expand, we need to evaluate current programs, processes, outreach efforts, and modalities through the perspective of growth. As presented in figure 6, population growth for this sector is significant if we can compete with larger institutions in terms of programming, pricing, speed, and flexibility.

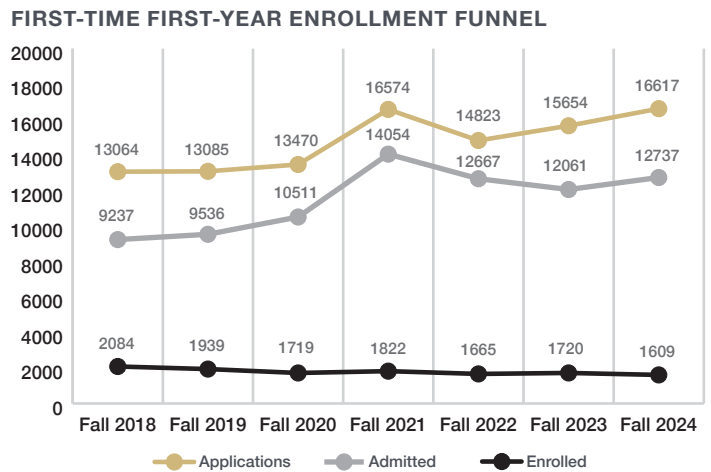Figure 4: First-Time First-Year Enrollment Funnel

FIRST-TIME FIRST-YEAR ENROLLMENT FUNNEL

Figure 5: Transfer Student Funnel

TRANSFER ENROLLMENT FUNNEL

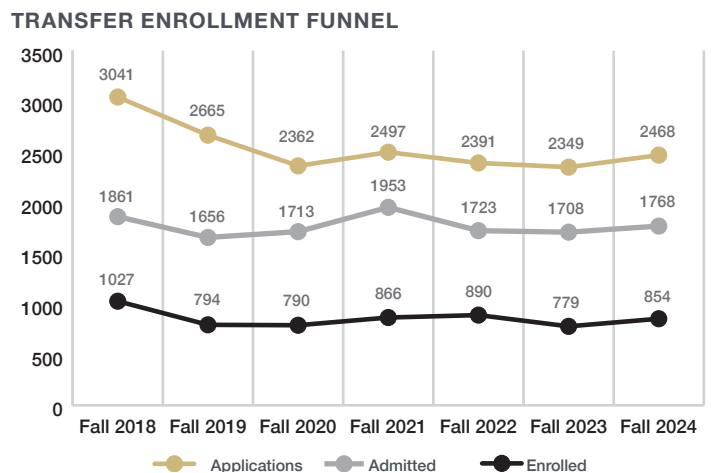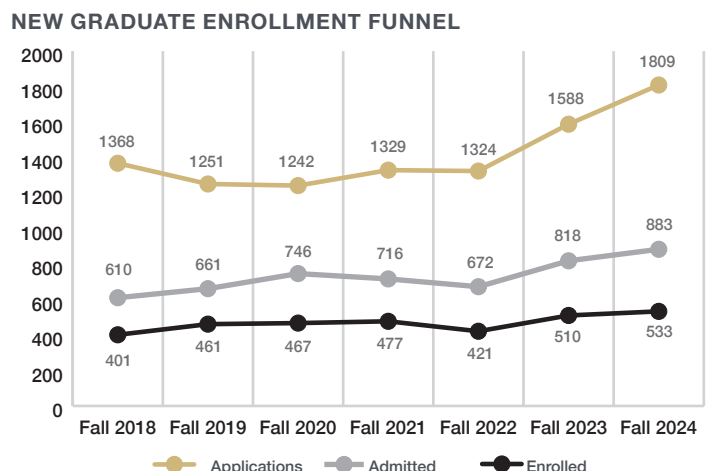Figure 6: Graduate Student Funnel

NEW GRADUATE ENROLLMENT FUNNEL

Enrollment and Retention

Total new student enrollment is recovering slowly from the fall 2020 COVID-19 low, primarily because of growth in the graduate sector and marginal recovery with new freshmen.

New first-time first-year enrollment is making incremental gains. With the decreasing high school graduation rates in Colorado, we can expect a slow recovery. New high school pipelines, such as concurrent[10] and dual enrollment, can fill some gaps, but both pipelines fluctuate. School district demand, P-12 funding, and institutional seat availability are variables that contribute to swings in this population and subsequent complexity for planning revenue projections.

Transfer student enrollment was at its highest in 2016, then fell from 2017 to 2020. In 2016, the CU Board of Regents (BoR) approved a +4% tuition increase. In 2017, when we see the first new transfer decline, the BoR approved another tuition increase of +2.6% and total campus enrollment surpassed 12,400 students. In the same year, the campus experienced an uptick in sponsored program revenue ($8 million) and broke ground on the ENT Center for the Arts. Although these events appear unrelated, the shift in campus culture moved toward a traditional first-time student experience and may have affected our ability to recruit transfer students. During the decline, we built first-year programs, but we failed to provide support for those transferring in. Between 2016 and 2019, we experienced a -30.4% decline in incoming transfer students.

The fall 2024 enrollment cycle produced one of the largest incoming graduate student classes in our history. The strongest growth comes from Business Administration, Nursing, and Social Work. Our institution offers all three programs online. This growth shows that our graduate population is looking for program flexibility and defined career paths.

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10   Colorado Department of Higher Education (2023). Concurrent Enrollment Data and Trends. Colorado State Report on Higher Education.

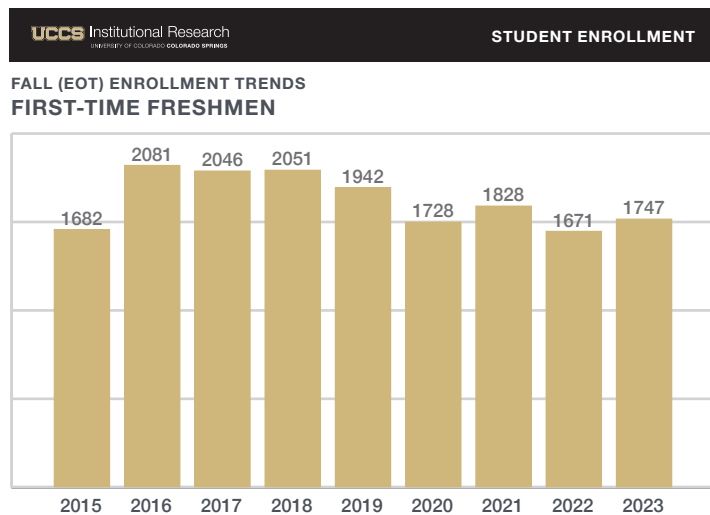Figure 7: First-Time First-Year Trends
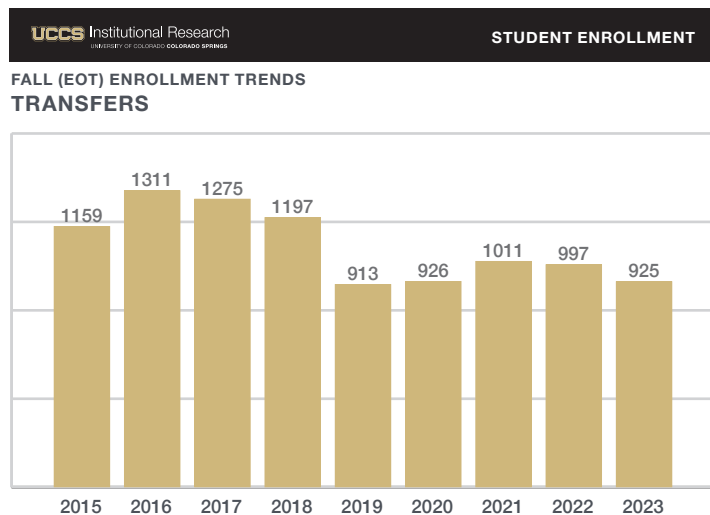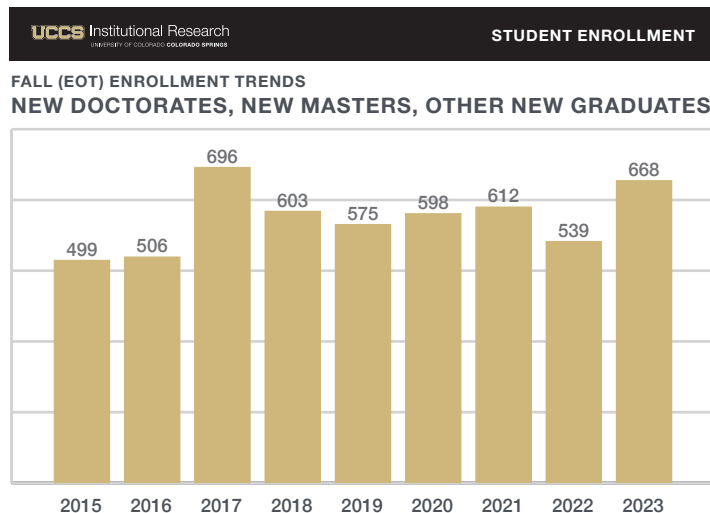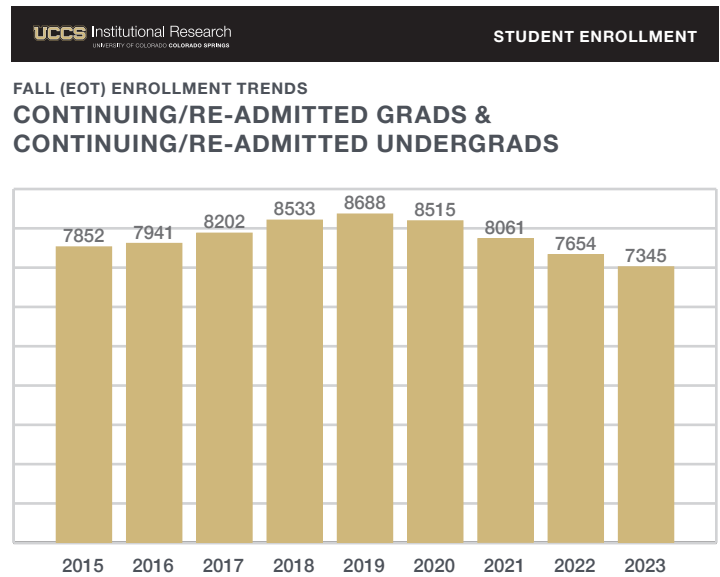

Figure 8: New Transfer Student Enrollment

Figure 9: New Graduate Student Enrollment

Continuing student enrollment is an area for concern.

UCCS has experienced new student growth which varies by student population; however, the growth is not high enough to keep enrollment level. From 2019 to 2023, we experienced a -15.5% reduction in continuing student headcount. Our large 2016 to 2019 incoming first-time first-year cohorts have moved through their academic careers without replacement; however, we continue to lose students to early departures. For the fall 2022 enrolled class, after adjusting for degrees granted, we lost 18.42% (N= 1660) of our enrolled undergraduates to drop-out, stop-out, or transfer-out behavior.

Figure 10: Continuing Student Enrollment

UCCS Institutional Research
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

FALL (EOT) ENROLLMENT TRENDS
CONTINUING/RE-ADMITTED GRADS &
CONTINUING/RE-ADMITTED UNDERGRADS

Year	Value
2015	7852
2016	7941
2017	8202
2018	8533
2019	8688
2020	8515
2021	8061
2022	7654
2023	7345

First-time first-year student retention is a critical area for concern.

Official IPEDs retention rates for full-time first-time degree seeking students have hovered between 66% to 70% despite efforts to address student programming needs with the Excel Tutoring Centers, required first-year on-campus housing, First-year Experience Programming, Academic Fitness Intervention, Peer Leaders, and mentoring programs. In 2022, we lost 38.26% of students who had fewer than 30 cumulative credit hours to early departure. To address retention, we need to systemically review variables including academic policies, student affinity and engagement, the tuition pricing structure which increases after 60 student credit hours are earned, and student success programming to confirm student departure is not related to our current policies and business practices.

Figure 11: Freshman Retention

UCCS Institutional Research
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

OVERALL ONE YEAR FULL-TIME
FRESHMEN RETENTION

Year	Value
2015	69.2%
2016	66.3%
2017	68.8%
2018	69.6%
2019	70%
2020	66.9%
2021	67.7%
2022	67.1%
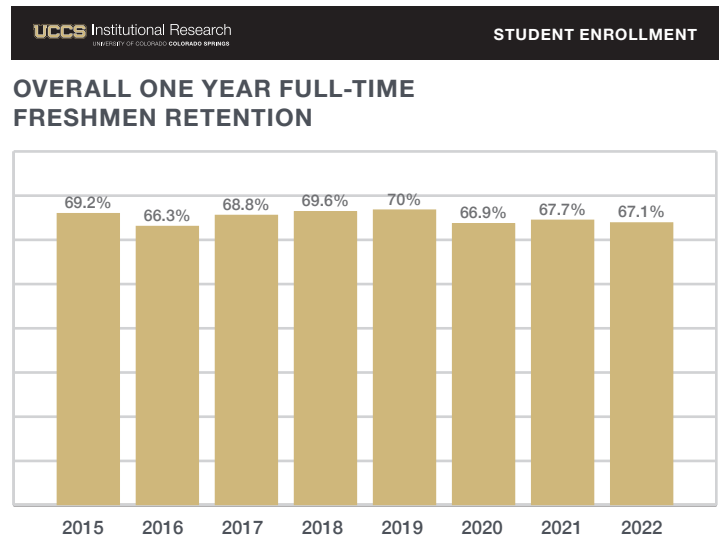
Comparative Price Benchmarking Study

UCCS, as part of the strategic enrollment planning process, engaged RNL to complete a comparative price benchmarking study[11] between UCCS and 8 brick-and-mortar campuses and 7 online institutions using two perspectives, one based on IPEDS[12] data and the other based on website tuition calculations. RNL examined two rate models, one being a flat rate model, and the other is a tiered rate model.

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11   University of Colorado Colorado Springs Comparative Price Benchmark Study 2024
12   US. Department of Education (2023) IPEDS Data. National

Key Findings

- In most in-state instances, this study found that in 2024, the flat-rate structure of $487 per student credit hour presents UCCS as moderately priced amongst competitors from both perspectives (IPEDS data & UCCS website calculations). However, recent work to look at structural equality may change this data point as we move into 2025.

- The undergraduate in-state flat rate would be the second highest flat rate compared to the 3 adjacent institutions that offer flat-rate pricing but would position UCCS toward the middle of the total comparison group when considering all model scenarios.

- The proposed flat-rate structure of $11,120 results in the second highest out-of-state tuition rate.

- Tiered and differential rates do not provide a pricing advantage compared to our local competitors.

- The UCCS proposed flat rate for online instruction puts UCCS in the middle of the online comparison groups.

- The proposed lowest online tiered rate for online instruction is detrimental as it positions UCCS with the highest online rate among the reviewed competitors.

Study Recommendation

- Market differentiation is a benefit of adopting a transparent and less complex tuition model. If UCCS is looking for a cost advantage, the flat rate examined positions UCCS as a moderately priced institution.

Study Considerations

- The proposed UCCS tuition appears to be "higher than the CSU-Global, Southern New Hampshire, University of Maryland (out-of-state rate), and Western Governors."

- Is a tuition advantage a benefit for recruitment and enrollment, or would investment in institutional aid function as a better recruitment tool?

Program Demand Gap Analysis

The Division of Administration and Finance collaborated with Gavin LePage, an Economic Analyst at Lightcast—a leader in labor market data—to conduct a program gap analysis aimed at aligning educational offerings with the demands of Colorado's strengthening workforce. The analysis focused on labor needs across the state, with a focus on El Paso County to examine shifting demographic trends.

By analyzing Colorado's projected annual job openings from 2023 to 2033 and comparing them with educational program completions, Lightcast[13] identified key areas where educational growth could better meet workforce needs.

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13   Lightcast. (2024). Program Demand Gap Analysis: Workforce Needs and Higher Education Opportunities in Colorado and El Paso County. Lightcast Economic Analyst Report.

Key Findings

Statewide Findings

- **Job Growth:** Colorado is expected to see job growth of +11.52%, significantly outpacing population growth of +4.30% over the next decade.

- **Industry Advantage:** Three of the top 15 industry subsectors in Colorado show a comparative advantage over other regions:

  - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
  - State Government
  - Real Estate

- **Educational Attainment:** 44% of Colorado's population holds a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the national average of 35%.

El Paso County Findings

- **Job Growth:** In El Paso County, job growth is projected at +12.78%, surpassing both the county's population growth of +5.96% and the statewide job growth rate of +11.52%. The county's population growth will also exceed the state average.

- **Industry Advantage:** Eight of the top 15 industry subsectors in El Paso County have a competitive edge compared to other regions.

  - Federal Government
  - Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
  - Ambulatory Health Care Services
  - Religious, Grant-making, Civic, Professional, & Similar Organizations
  - State Government
  - Insurance Carriers & Related Activities
  - Real Estate
  - Accommodation

- **Educational Attainment:** In El Paso County, 60% of the population has an associate's degree or less, 4% higher than the statewide average, though lower than the national average of 65%. This suggests a larger pool of adult learners compared to the state, but smaller than the national level.

- **Program Growth Opportunities:** Insights from the analysis, based on education levels and median wages, highlight areas where investments in program development could support workforce needs across all educational levels.

Recommendations

The program gap analysis led to four key recommendations:

1. **Opportunities for Growth:** Identifying areas where educational programs can expand to meet workforce needs.

2. **Industry Partnerships:** Leveraging collaborations with industry to boost employment demand and align programs with job market trends.

3. **Sustaining Growth and Quality:** Ensuring ongoing program development while maintaining high standards of educational quality.

4. **Program Evaluation:** Assessing programs based on completions and employment outcomes to determine their effectiveness.

The program gap analysis reveals critical opportunities for aligning educational offerings with workforce needs in both Colorado and El Paso County. By focusing on growth areas, fostering industry partnerships, maintaining program quality, and evaluating outcomes, the university can strategically position itself to meet the evolving needs of the labor market. As we move forward, it will be essential to refine program-to-employment tracking, particularly for post-baccalaureate certificates, to ensure our programs are directly contributing to both individual career success and the broader economic development of the region.

Strategic Imperatives and Priorities

Following an in-depth review of workgroup situation analyses, five overarching themes emerged as strategic imperatives. The planning committee and work groups prioritized these to boost enrollment, retention, and persistence at UCCS. SEP workgroups developed comprehensive action plans, which were reviewed by the Steering Committee and condensed into actionable steps.

Strategic Recommendations for Sustainable Growth and Fiscal Stabilization

- **Enhance the Student Experience:** Prioritize student engagement, loyalty, and support to improve satisfaction and success.

- **Improve Affordability and Pricing Transparency:** Address financial barriers by making costs clearer and enhancing financial support options.

- **Expand High-Demand Programs:** Grow institutional capacity by offering more online, HyFlex, and hybrid programs, addressing differing student needs and market demand.

- **Strengthen Institutional Branding and Marketing:** Invest in a more defined identity and strategic marketing to attract and retain students.

- **Invest in Technology, Infrastructure, and Facilities:** Allocate resources to modernize the campus environment and technological infrastructure.

This is a dynamic plan, guided by the principle of aggregated marginal gain. We assert, by making small, incremental improvements in various aspects of the student experience and operations, we will achieve measurable outcomes. Each enhancement, while modest on its own, contributes to a cumulative positive impact, setting the foundation for future growth. Incremental improvements will aggregate overtime by addressing specific, measurable aspects of an institution's performance, which collectively enhance its overall operations, outcomes, and reputation.

Strategic Imperative 1: Improve UCCS Student Journeys

Focus on Student Experience

Why the student journey?

Navigating the student journey presents various challenges. Many of these arise from complex, undocumented, and poorly communicated business practices, which impede both students and staff. This can delay crucial person-to-person outreach and interventions that significantly impact student success.

To ensure long-term stability, UCCS must continuously evaluate and position itself as an attractive and competitive option for both current and prospective students. This involves ongoing assessment of factors such as recruitment, engagement, inclusion, program offerings, affordability, retention, persistence, and the barriers students face. Through this process, we can cultivate a public identity rooted in excellence that aligns with our mission and priorities.

As stewards of the student journey, we must actively seek to understand and meet our students' expectations, experiences, and outcomes. These insights should influence what our community perceives, feels, shares, and remembers. By pinpointing discrepancies between students' expectations and our current practices. Imperative 1 aims to cultivate a well-rounded and cohesive campus culture grounded in shared understanding and consensus.

The corresponding action plan emphasizes improving the student journey by addressing key areas, such as accessibility, student engagement, and operational efficiency.

Action Plan for Improving Student Journeys

1. **Conduct a Comprehensive Review of the Student Journey:**

   Assess the entire student experience from application through graduation. Develop tailored student journey tracks that reflect the needs and pathways of UCCS's student population. Utilize technology, when appropriate, and high touch human interactions to build affinity. Document, streamline, and communicate all business policies and practices clearly.

   Justification: Thoroughly reviewing the student journey allows UCCS to gain a holistic understanding of the student experience from the initial application process through graduation. Barriers to enrollment and completion occur for almost every student; this review quantifies these barriers and prioritizes our action plan to address unnecessary or inadvertent impediments to success.

2. **Collaborate with University Advancement to Create Targeted Fundraising Campaigns:**

   Develop detailed student journey stories and personas. Use these insights to design focused fundraising initiatives that address the needs of new and emerging student populations, aligning resources with strategic growth areas.

   Justification: Collaborating with University Advancement to develop detailed student journey stories and personas provides a narrative that resonates with potential students, donors, and stakeholders. By using these insights, we can pinpoint the specific needs of new and emerging student populations. This ensures that fundraising initiatives align with institutional priorities and growth areas. Targeted campaigns can address gaps in resources or support for these populations, making it easier to attract funding and support for programs that will enhance student experiences and outcomes.

3. **Implement Student-Centered Admissions Policies:**

Create and implement admissions policies that directly admit both new and continuing students into their chosen college. Develop pathways that ensure students can meet graduation requirements, with a focus on providing access to courses, flexible degree plans, and a designated academic home that supports long-term success. Create and support transparent transfer pathways that provide credit for community college work and prior learning.

Justification: Student-centered admissions policies are essential for creating a welcoming educational environment for all student communities. By directly admitting both new and continuing students into their chosen college, UCCS can streamline the admissions process and reduce barriers to entry. Developing clear pathways that guide students in meeting graduation requirements fosters access to courses and flexible degree plans, ensuring that all students have the support they need to succeed. Designating an academic home provides a sense of security and stability, which is critical for long-term student success and retention.

Comprehensively reviewing the student journey, partnering with University Advancement for targeted fundraising campaigns, and implementing student-centered admissions policies—are crucial steps toward enhancing the overall student experience at UCCS. By systematically assessing the student journey, we can identify and address barriers, ensuring that all students have access to the support and resources they need to thrive.

Collaborating with University Advancement will enable us to create compelling narratives that attract funding for underrepresented populations, aligning our initiatives with strategic growth areas. Adopting student-centered admissions policies will facilitate a smoother transition for both new and continuing students, promoting affinity within our academic community. Together, these actions will position UCCS as a forward-thinking institution committed to student success and institutional excellence.

Strategic Imperative 2: Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways

Expand High Demand Programming to Address Student Needs, Specifically Online, HyFlex and Hybrid Programs

Why modernize?

The competitive landscape for UCCS is expanding, with new market forces challenging traditional approaches to program delivery. Competitors are offering innovative options, such as three-year bachelor's degree tracks, highly flexible modalities, and financial incentives that UCCS does not have the resources to match. This is especially true for unique student populations like post-traditional students looking for prior learning credit, graduate students, online learners, and high school students seeking early college credit.

At UCCS, creating new programs is complex and labor-intensive. Without adequate incentives, it is challenging for faculty to develop new programs while managing existing workloads. To remain competitive, UCCS must offer fiscally supported pathways, enabling the development of quality online and non-traditional offerings that align with evolving student expectations.

Many students have expressed interest in starting their academic careers in the summer semester. However, limited course offerings and seat availability prevent them from doing so. Faculty constraints, because of nine-month contracts,

make expanding summer offerings difficult unless we can create flexible 9-month contracts to shift summer coverage, invest in overload pay, or hire a greater number of temporary faculty. Expanding summer options would meet student needs, enhance satisfaction, and foster institutional loyalty.

As custodians of the student journey, we must meet students where they are, not where we think they should be. Implementing student-centric practices will drive both enrollment and persistence. We must streamline the admissions process, particularly in reducing the time between application and admission notification. Research shows that early admission decisions significantly increase a student's likelihood of committing to enrollment. UCCS cannot afford to lose students to competitors who admit more swiftly.

Finally, creating a seamless experience for high school students participating in UCCS coursework fosters a sense of direction and a welcoming community. By easing their transition to college, we reduce anxiety and promote a sense of security. Positive early experiences with UCCS will increase interest in traditional degree programs and improve retention and degree progression, thanks to early success and strong community support.

This action plan emphasizes the need to modernize UCCS's approach to education and respond to market demands by creating flexible, student-centered pathways.

Action Plan for Modernization and Growth

1. Expand Online Programs and Credentials:

- Provide additional training and funding to faculty for developing online courses, micro-credentials, stackable credentials, skill development pathways, modern teaching practices, and fully online degree programs.

- Provide varied teaching practices to support different learners.

- Encourage the creation of innovative programs through professional development and financial incentives to drive faculty participation.

- Develop a beneficial credit for prior learning policy to provide an efficient enrollment pathway.

  Justification: Expanding online offerings meets the growing demand for flexible learning options and enables UCCS to attract post-traditional students who seek innovative and accessible educational pathways.

2. Develop Flexible Degree Programs:

- Develop and operationalize the necessary tools to support the development of flexible programming.

- Design and implement accelerated bachelor's degree tracks to meet market demand for faster degree completion without sacrificing academic rigor. Consider programs with alternative scheduling, flexible start-dates, accelerated programs, concurrent high school to baccalaureate program pathways, stackable credentials and micro-credentials to provide career-focused credentials that supplement current academic pathways.

- Improve seamless bachelor-to-graduate program pathways to attract students seeking continuous academic progression.

  Justification: As competitors offer expedited degree options, providing three-year programs helps UCCS remain competitive, attract students looking to graduate sooner, and facilitate continuous academic advancement.

3. Create Incentives for Online Credential Development:

Offer financial incentives or course offloads to faculty for developing online credentials such as micro-credentials, stackable credentials, and skill development programs, which will increase UCCS's market competitiveness and appeal to non-traditional learners.

Justification: Financial incentives motivate faculty to invest time in developing new and relevant credentials, enhancing UCCS's offerings and aligning with industry needs for skill-based education.

4. Strengthen Educational Pipelines:

High School to College

- Enhance course offerings, advising, and student outreach for high school learners enrolled in concurrent or dual enrollment programs.

- Improve tracking systems for these students to ensure better monitoring of progress and timely interventions.

- Create a smooth pathway for baccalaureate enrollment through early admission or assured admission to reduce application wait time and reduce the students' administrative load.

Adult Learners to College

- Enhance flexibility, course offerings, advising, and resources for post-traditional learners.

- Consider investing in adult learner advising.

- Create a smooth pathway for baccalaureate and graduate enrollment through outreach, credit for prior learning or assured admission to reduce application wait time and reduce the students' administrative load.

Justification: By providing more robust support and clear pathways for new students, UCCS can ease their transition to college, increase enrollment, and foster comfort within the university community.

5. Establish a High School Outreach Position or Office to Foster Concurrent and Dual Enrollment:

Create a position dedicated to managing high school and district partnerships, oversee memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and coordinate advisement and recruitment efforts specifically for students in concurrent enrollment programs. We should prioritize growing this into a High School Outreach Office as revenue increases.

Justification: A dedicated office will streamline outreach efforts, improve relationships with local high schools, and enhance recruitment strategies, ultimately leading to increased enrollment from high school students.

6. Foster a Culture of Data-Informed Decision Making:

Promote data literacy and encourage departments to engage in regular self-assessment. Use data-driven insights to inform program development, student services, and operational improvements.

Justification: A data-informed culture enables UCCS to identify strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that decisions are based on evidence and aligning resources effectively to support student success.

7. Implement Flexible Teaching Contracts:

Offer the flexibility of both 9 and 12-month teaching contracts to faculty to expand summer course offerings and subsidize additional temporary and visiting faculty to reduce the reliance on overload pay, ensuring students have access to the courses they need year-round.

Justification: Year-round and flexible contracts provide an incentive for faculty to teach during the summer. Flexible contracts help address student demand for more course options and promote continuous engagement without compromising faculty workload.

The proposed action plan represents a comprehensive approach to modernizing UCCS's educational offerings and enhancing the student experience. By expanding online programs, developing innovative degree pathways, and strengthening connections with high school students, we can effectively respond to the new demands of the education landscape.

Fostering a culture of data-informed decision-making and providing support for faculty development will empower UCCS to remain competitive in a challenging market. Establishing dedicated outreach efforts and incentivizing year-round teaching will not only enhance enrollment and retention rates, but also create a more welcoming and supportive environment for all students.

By implementing these actions, UCCS can position itself as a leader in higher education, committed to meeting the needs of our student population while promoting academic excellence and institutional growth. Together, we can build a resilient and innovative educational community that prepares students for success in their academic and professional endeavors.

Strategic Imperative 3: Reimagine the Recruitment & Admissions Experience

Focus on the Student Experience
Consider Investment in Technology, Infrastructure and Facilities

Why reimagine?

At UCCS, our goal is to ensure that every student feels welcome and valued. To foster a sense of place, students must engage with dynamic programs and build meaningful relationships both inside and outside the classroom. While there are numerous actions to enhance our recruitment and admissions process, the EMSA Division has prioritized several immediate initiatives: optimizing our CRM platform, developing an interactive welcome center, improving visibility of essential information for decision-making, and enhancing the transfer student admission experience.

Our Customer Relationship Management System offers some potential for outreach and engagement. However, we need to evaluate the tool's efficacy and determine the benefits we are receiving from a substantial fiscal investment. By leveraging the capabilities of an appropriate CRM to organize email and text campaigns, track student data throughout the student journey, and identify key tipping points that influence student outcomes, we can significantly enhance our effectiveness. Investing to support a CRM's functionality will lead to more cohesive communication campaigns, improved data analysis, and a coordinated approach to student outreach and support.

Campus visits are often the first opportunity for students and their families to experience UCCS firsthand. In our competitive landscape, making a memorable impression is crucial. By creating wonder and fostering affinity from the moment students arrive on campus, we can craft an engaging narrative that resonates with prospective students, families, and community members. A modern and welcoming Welcome Center will reinforce our institutional identity and leave a lasting first impression.

Our environmental analysis indicates that while transfer student enrollment has historically been strong, it is currently declining. To reverse this trend, we must implement new processes for transfer student admissions, enhance transfer credit transparency, and improve self-service options to expedite responses to inquiries. Furthermore, providing all prospective students with access to comprehensive information about academic programs and specific college requirements will increase transparency and build trust throughout the admissions process.

This action plan reinforces the commitment to enhancing the student experience, improving recruitment and admissions processes, and fostering a sense of acceptance at UCCS.

Action Plan for Reimagining Recruitment

1. **Conduct a Comprehensive Assessment of Current Recruitment and Admissions Processes:**

    - **Action:** Analyze existing A&R processes to identify inefficiencies and areas for improvement.

    - **Action:** Provide staff skill development opportunities related to educational insight.

    Justification: By assessing current processes, UCCS can pinpoint limitations and opportunities for alignment with best practices that support community members. This will streamline operations, reduce communication delays, and enhance the overall student experience for prospective students.

2. **Modernize Application Materials:**

    Action: Review and update application materials to ensure they are user-friendly, brief, and reflective of contemporary standards.

    Justification: Modernized application materials simplify the application process, making the activity more accessible and appealing to today's tech-savvy students. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to decrease the total time to a student's admission decision and generates operational efficiencies in the admissions office. This can enhance the overall applicant experience and improve conversion and yield rates.

3. **Create Opportunities for Prospective Student Engagement Campuswide:**

    Action: Provide regularly scheduled and advertised events where prospective students (transfer, high school, parents, and adult learners) can regularly engage with UCCS students, staff, and faculty on campus. This will require community partnerships and outreach.

    Justification: Frequent quality interactions at sporting events, speaker events, and student events will build community affinity and will normalize campus visits to reduce threshold reluctance.

4. **Explore Data-Informed Strategies to Broaden Student Name Buys:**

    Action: Implement data-driven approaches to broaden recruitment efforts and target underrepresented student populations.

    Justification: Strategic student lead purchasing allows UCCS to reach a wider audience, helping to attract a student body that better represents the communities of Colorado.

5. **Conduct a Needs Assessment for a UCCS Welcome Center:**

Action: Evaluate the feasibility and requirements for establishing a single-site physical Welcome Center to enhance visitor experience.

Justification: A dedicated Welcome Center can significantly improve the first impression of UCCS, creating "wow" moments that foster engagement and interest among prospective students and their families.

6. **Enhance the Transfer Student Application Process:**

Action: Streamline business practices, clarify transfer credit eligibility, and increase transparency for prospective transfer students and adult learners.

Justification: Improving the transfer application process can lead to higher enrollment rates among transfer students. Clear communication and efficient processes reduce barriers and enhance the overall experience for this demographic.

7. **Consider Technology Solutions for Transfer Advising:**

Action: Evaluate and procure tools like Edvisorly, CollegeVine AI technologies, or the EAB transfer platform to facilitate self-service transfer advising.

Justification: Technology solutions can expedite the transfer evaluation process and improve engagement through self-service personalized options, making the transition smoother for students and increasing satisfaction.

8. **Implement Integrated Technological Support Throughout the Student Journey:**

Action: Develop a cohesive technological infrastructure that supports students from recruitment through graduation. This infrastructure should encompass short format video, AI improvements, and a foundation for digital learning experiences.

Justification: Integrated technology improves transparency and facilitates communication across various touchpoints, enhancing the overall student experience and increasing the likelihood of successful enrollment and retention. Technology use can increase students' feelings of uniqueness, mattering, and acceptance.

9. **Review and Revise College Admissions Policies:**

Action: Assess current admission policies in cooperation with Academic Affairs to identify opportunities for cooperative planning with Academic Affairs for improvement in recruitment, enrollment, engagement, retention, and graduation rates.

Justification: Revising admissions policies to allow students to be admitted directly to their college of choice can create affinity and enhance student engagement from the outset. We should incorporate reviewing policies into our regular planning processes.

10. Promote Language Inclusivity for Student and Parent Support:

- **Action:** Widen admissions materials and resources to ensure they are accessible to non-native English speakers.

- **Action:** Invest in multilingual staff as support in the MOSAIC office, to reduce institutional reliance on existing multilingual staff who have existing professional responsibilities that do not include translation. To reduce staff turnover, we need to build reasonable practices that do not default to extra uncompensated responsibilities.

Justification: Promoting language inclusivity in admissions resources removes barriers for differing populations, fostering a welcoming environment and increasing accessibility for all prospective students.

This action plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance the recruitment and admissions processes at UCCS, focusing on improving the overall student experience. By assessing current practices, modernizing application materials, and leveraging technology, UCCS can streamline operations, broaden its student body, and create a welcoming environment that meets the needs of all students. The emphasis on transparency and program visibility will not only attract new students, but also support their successful transition into academic life at UCCS. By implementing these actionable steps, the university can position itself as a leader in student engagement and retention, ultimately driving enrollment growth and institutional success.

Strategic Imperative 4: Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage

Improve Affordability and Pricing Transparency
Focus on the Student Experience
Improve Institutional Branding, Identity, and Marketing

Why affordability and marketing?

Reducing Student Withdrawal Rates:
It is essential for UCCS to lower the student withdrawal rate, as many students leave before completing their degrees. Factors contributing to this include outstanding tuition balances, student loans, and challenges in saving enough for subsequent semesters. To combat this issue, students and their families need a clearer understanding of the cost of attendance and the return on investment associated with earning a college degree. Before students begin their first semester, educational institutions should provide comprehensive guidance and support for financing education, along with price transparency.

Competitive Advantage:

By allocating more resources to enhance brand awareness throughout Southern Colorado—particularly in rural communities—UCCS can effectively differentiate itself from local institutions. This effort will involve implementing student-centered initiatives that foster positive perceptions and build a strong university identity. As UCCS strengthens its reputation as the premier university for Southern Coloradans, improved awareness and perception will lead to increased engagement with prospective students.

Developing pathways for non-traditional students, promoting unique programs, and expanding communication about institutional innovations, faculty research, and local partnerships will cultivate community support and boost student interest. This strategic approach not only elevates UCCS's profile but also reinforces its commitment to accessibility and affordability in higher education.

The action plan below effectively supports the overarching goals of improving affordability and enhancing brand awareness at UCCS. By addressing financial transparency and promoting the value of education while also investing in cohesive branding efforts, UCCS can foster a stronger connection with students and the community, leading to improved enrollment and retention rates.

Action Plan for Affordability

1. Simplify Tuition and Fee Structure:

Action: Develop and implement a streamlined tuition and fee structure for UCCS students.

Justification: This will enhance fiscal transparency, enabling better financial planning for students and parents while improving institutional budget forecasting. This will also eliminate the surprise increase in tuition in the junior year.

2. Address Pricing Disparities:

Action: Conduct a thorough examination of pricing disparities for:

- Upper-division undergraduates with over 60 cumulative credit hours.
- Transfer students with 60 or more transfer credits.
- Second Baccalaureate seekers.
- Non-degree seeking students.
- Micro-credential programs.

Justification: Identifying and addressing these disparities will help make UCCS more accessible, reducing barriers that could lead to student withdrawal. We have an automatic price premium that is activated as students earn 60 credit hours. This premium may feel like a penalty for students who persevere, leading successful students to transfer out of UCCS prior to degree completion.

Action Plan for Marketing

1. **Modernize the UCCS Website:**

   Action: Redesign the UCCS website to function as an enrollment driver by providing an accessible, inspirational, and dynamic digital presence.

   Justification: We have a noticeably brief window to tell our story to organic and nurtured prospective students looking for answers to the "institutional fit" question. Through recent research, we know that Gen Z, Gen Pandemic (Gen P), and future Alphas do not have the patience to navigate digital experiences that experts are calling "underwhelming".[14]

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   14   https://eab.com/resources/podcasts/how-to-turn-your-website-into-an-enrollment-engine/

2. **Increase Program Visibility and Knowledge for Prospective Students:**

   Action: Enhance the visibility of academic programs and provide comprehensive information to help prospective students navigate their options.

   Justification: Providing simple information about programs fosters informed decision-making, leading to smoother admissions experiences and increased retention as students' progress through their academic careers.

3. **Enhance Financial Literacy Communication:**

   - **Action:** Develop and implement targeted communication strategies focused on financial literacy for students and their families.

   - **Sub-action:** Provide programming that educates on the tangible and intangible benefits of earning both baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

   - **Sub-action:** Provide programming for fiscal literacy, including the disadvantages of departing without a credential, return on investment, and debt management.

   Justification: Increasing financial literacy will empower students and families to make informed decisions, ultimately reducing the withdrawal rate.

4. **Reinforce Community Value:**

   Action: Reinforce UCCS's Value to the Community. Identify and implement strategies that highlight the value of UCCS through enhancements to the student experience and returns on investment.

   To increase enrollment and improve recruitment:

   - **State-Level Branding:** Focus on strengthening UCCS's identity across Colorado to ensure it becomes a first-choice institution for students statewide.

   - **National Outreach:** Build a unique brand identity highlighting specialized programs (e.g., cybersecurity, health sciences, and real estate management) and leverage online offerings to attract out-of-state and adult students.

   Justification: Elevating the student experience will strengthen UCCS's reputation in the community and foster greater engagement.

5. Create Cohesive University Branding:

Action: Develop and execute intentional and cohesive branding initiatives for UCCS.

- **Sub-action:** Manage the university's messaging by:
  - Creating unified marketing strategies that highlight UCCS's unique strengths and institutional values.
  - Collaborating with internal stakeholders to leverage campus-wide resources and expertise.
  - Explore the use of CU Colorado Springs rather than UCCS.

Justification: A strong, cohesive brand will improve UCCS's overall visibility and differentiation from local competitors.

6. Invest in Local Branding Opportunities:

Action: Allocate resources to local branding initiatives focusing on the Pikes Peak Region and Southern Colorado.

Justification: Investing in local branding will enhance UCCS's community presence, solidifying its position as the premier university serving Southern Coloradans.

This action plan outlines strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing both affordability and brand awareness for UCCS. By simplifying the tuition and fee structure, addressing pricing disparities, and enhancing financial literacy, UCCS can create a more transparent and accessible financial landscape for its students. Concurrently, reinforcing the university's value to the community through cohesive branding and local marketing efforts will strengthen its identity and differentiate it from competitors. Together, these actions will not only improve student retention and success but also solidify UCCS's position as the premier educational institution in Southern Colorado, fostering long-term growth and community engagement.

Strategic Imperative 5: Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care

Focus on the Student Experience
Consider Investment in Technology, Infrastructure and Facilities

Why student care?

In the aftermath of COVID-19, students have expressed an increasing need for connection and support. This plan addresses those needs as they develop, with the goal of fostering a sense of loyalty and strengthening the bond between students and the institution. Enhanced access to faculty, staff, and campus resources will help cultivate a more vibrant and supportive campus community.

Creating inviting spaces and increasing campus connections are essential steps toward enhancing this sense of acceptance, which leads to higher student satisfaction, improved persistence, and greater degree attainment. Welcoming environments encourage students to spend more time in residence halls, on campus, and interacting with their peers.

Implementing evidence-based teaching and learning practices is crucial for improving academic success and increasing the likelihood of degree completion. While UCCS already boasts a solid foundation of excellent teaching and learning resources, there are still opportunities to build upon this framework. Our changing student population presents new challenges, including a heightened demand for mental health resources, decreased resilience, and increased feelings of isolation.

A campus renowned for prioritizing student wellness, like UCCS, offers advantages that extend beyond academics. This holistic approach fosters a nurturing environment where students feel valued, supported, and connected, leading to improved academic performance and overall well-being. Access to comprehensive mental health resources, wellness programs, and supportive community networks encourage students to develop healthy habits that contribute to their long-term success.

A commitment to student wellness cultivates a culture of resilience. When students feel supported by their institution, they are more likely to persist in their studies, engage actively in campus life, and form meaningful relationships with peers and faculty. This sense of community enriches their college experience and lays a sound foundation for their future careers and personal lives.

Through this process, we have identified that some of our existing policies and practices may inadvertently create barriers to student persistence. These barriers can lead to unsatisfied students choosing to stop out, drop out, or pursue their degrees at other institutions. By improving these policies and operationalizing a continuum of care, we can enhance overall student success. Our primary goals are to develop and implement a consistent approach to student support that effectively addresses disengagement, early departure, and isolation.

By choosing UCCS, students are not just enrolling in a university; they are joining a community that prioritizes their holistic development and well-being. This commitment to student wellness positions UCCS as an ideal environment for those seeking to achieve academic excellence while enjoying a fulfilling and balanced college experience.

The corresponding action plan effectively captures our goals by focusing on building community, enhancing student wellness, and ensuring access to resources and support.

Action Plan for Cultivating a Continuum of Student Care

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Student Connection Strategy:**

   Action: For our distinct populations create a detailed plan to engage students at every stage of their academic journey, focusing on relationship-building with faculty, staff, and other students.

   Justification: Fostering strong connections enhances the institutional identity and promotes a sense of solidarity, which is crucial for student retention and success.

2. **Become *the* Wellness Campus for Colorado:**

   Action: Implement initiatives and programs that prioritize mental and physical wellness for students, including workshops, counseling services, and wellness activities, and market those programs and services to students and their families.

   Justification: Establishing UCCS as a wellness campus positions it as a supportive environment that addresses the holistic needs of students, which is increasingly important in the post-COVID context.

3. **Leverage Technology to Monitor Student Milestones:**

   Action: Utilize data analytics to track important student milestones, automate celebratory notifications, and send at-risk alerts for timely interventions.

   Justification: Proactive monitoring allows for timely support and recognition, enhancing student engagement and affinity, which increases the likelihood of degree completion.

4. **Achieve Full Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) Status:**

   Action: Design and invest in targeted programs and resources to transition from "Emerging HSI" to full HSI designation, focusing on the unique needs of Hispanic students. In the fall of 2024, 21.1% of our full-time degree-seeking undergraduates are Hispanic, UCCS must increase this enrollment to a minimum of 25% to qualify for the HSI designation. The Division of Strategic Initiatives, in cooperation with a new Advisory Committee, is outlining the process to support this Action Plan.

   Justification: Full HSI status will enhance resources and foster an environment that reflects the communities in Colorado.

5. **Incorporate Best Practices Across Key Areas:**

   Action: Research and implement best practices in teaching, student wellness, retention strategies, academic progression, and student engagement activities.

   Justification: Adopting proven strategies enhances the quality of education and support, contributing to overall student success.

6. **Enhance Campus Spaces for Student Satisfaction:**

   Action: Conduct a comprehensive assessment of campus facilities to create vibrant spaces that welcome the student body to promote engagement.

   Justification: Welcoming spaces foster a sense of affinity and encourage student interaction, which is vital for community building.

7. Address Financial Barriers to Student Success:

Actions:

- Implement longer payment plans to ease the financial burden on students.

- Educate students and families on the benefits of late 529 plans.

- Consider a "Mountain Lion Rebound Readmit Program" that offers fiscal incentives for returning students.

Justification: Reducing financial stress is essential for student retention. Informing students about financial options helps them make informed decisions about their education.

8. Assess and Adjust Policies to Support Student Continuation:

Action: Review and change policies related to:

- Student Financial Services timing of billing and collections to eliminate unexpected charges.

- Academic probation and suspension criteria that may discourage continuation.

- Service indicators and registration holds.

- Course registration timing and hierarchy.

- Course withdrawal timelines and scheduling practices.

- Fairness in transfer and PLA credit and admissions criteria.

- Availability of high-demand course modalities (online, hybrid, HyFlex).

- Transportation limitations on campus.

Justification: Streamlining policies and ensuring large-scale access to resources will remove barriers to student success, facilitate smoother transitions, and improve retention rates.

This action plan aims to create a holistic, supportive environment at UCCS that prioritizes student connection, wellness, and success. By addressing various facets of the student experience, from financial barriers to campus engagement, UCCS can foster a thriving academic community where all students feel valued and supported.

Conclusion

In summary, the strategic imperatives outlined—focused on sustainable growth and fiscal stabilization, enhancing the student journey for all populations, improving affordability and brand awareness, promoting student wellness and connection, and fostering a culture of care—collectively position UCCS for future success.

By implementing these imperatives, we are not just addressing immediate challenges; we are building a sound foundation for long-term resilience and excellence. Each action plan creates a comprehensive approach that prioritizes student needs, enhances institutional reputation, and promotes a culture of engagement.

As we move forward, our commitment to continuous assessment and improvement will ensure that we adapt to the changing landscape of higher education and the broad needs of our student population. Together, we can foster a dynamic learning environment that empowers students to thrive academically, socially, and personally, contributing to a stronger, more vibrant UCCS community. Through collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast focus on our mission, we can achieve our goals and solidify UCCS's position as a leading institution in Southern Colorado.

Impact Cost Matrix

Strategies and action plans vary in cost and potential effects. Figure 12 represents the actions within an impact cost matrix. Organizing SEP initiative implementation based on potential impact, resource availability and campus priorities provide a visual key to guide a five-year planning schedule.

Figure 12: Impact Cost Matrix

Action Step: 1
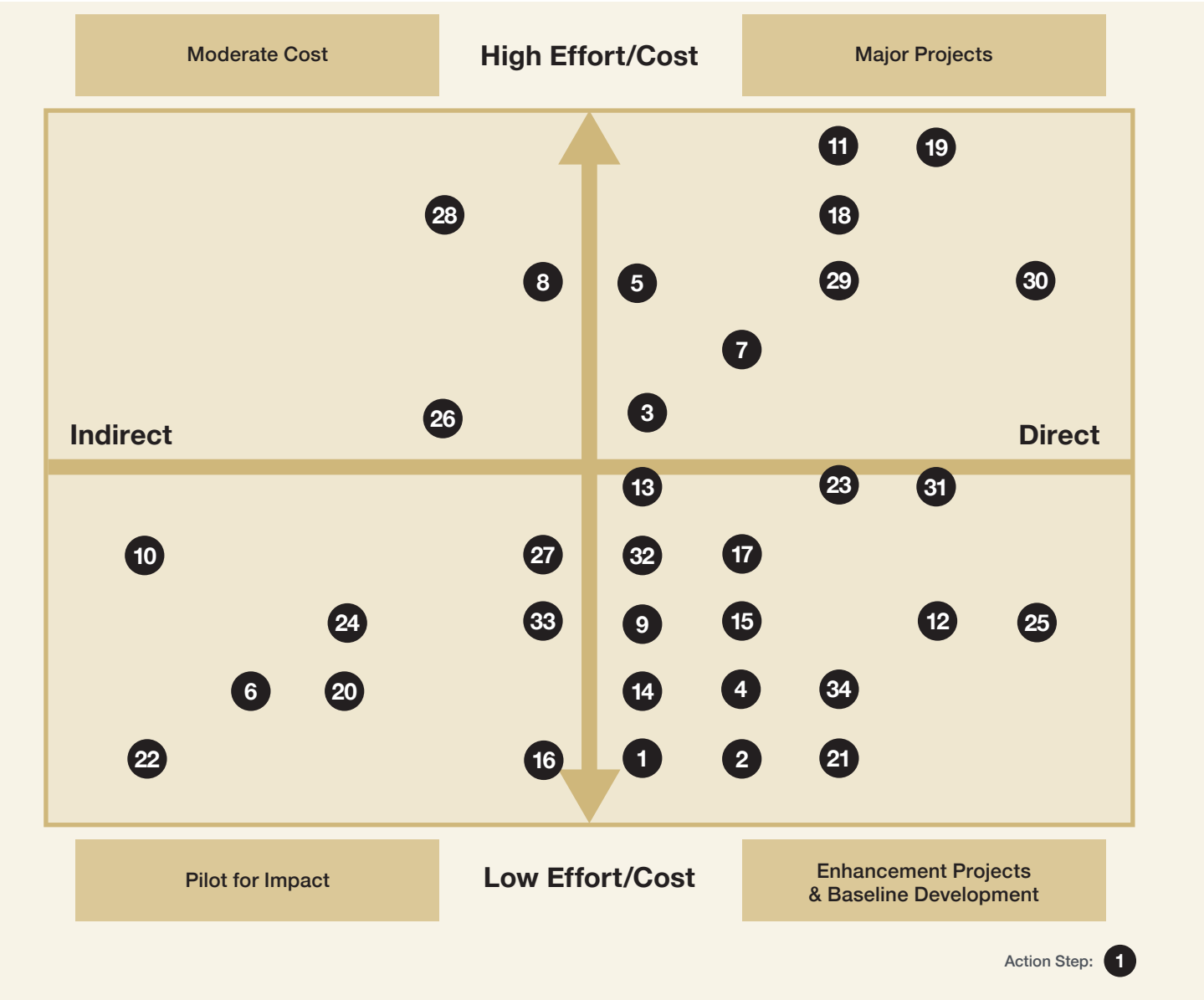
We group actions under each imperative and present them in action numbered order under each imperative. An estimated cost supplement is available in Appendix D. We use a scale of 1 to 10 to present the expected impact on enrollment, where 1 signifies an unknown impact (recommendation for a pilot study) and 10 signifies a significant, measurable impact. We estimate a significant, measurable impact at a 2% or greater improvement in retention, new student recruitment growth exceeding the standard deviation of a 5-year average, or an overall credit hour increase exceeding the standard deviation of the 5-year average of reportable credit hours. Some actions may not have a causal effect on enrollment growth but will increase institutional visibility to enhance our reputation as a distinguished institution of excellence. We identify these actions in the lower left quadrant of figure 12 and label them "indirect impact."

Table 9: Impact Cost Actions

Impact Cost Matrix Key

Strategic Imperative 1: Improve UCCS Student Journeys		
Action Name	**Action Key**	**Impact**
Review the Student Journey/ Streamline Admissions	Action 1	3
Implement Student Centered Admissions Policies (Transfer and FT-FY)	Action 2	4
Targeted Fundraising	Action 3	4
High School Concurrent Outreach	Action 4	5
HSI Status	Action 5	5
Create a Culture of Self-Assessment	Action 6	1
Strategic Imperative 2: Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways		
Expand Online Programs and Credentials	Action 7	4
Develop Flexible and Modern Degree Programs	Action 8	6
Flexible Teaching Contracts	Action 10	3
Maintain Centralized MKTG for Online	Action 13	6

Table 9: Impact Cost Actions Cont.

Strategic Imperative 3: Reimagine the Recruitment & Admissions Experience

Action Name	Action Key	Impact
Strengthen High School to College Pipeline	Action 9	5
Create a UCCS Welcome Center	Action 11	5
Redesign the Website to Create Communication Hub/Recruitment Engine	Action 12	8
Direct Admissions into Program of Choice	Action 14	6
Strategic Name Buys	Action 15	4

Strategic Imperative 4: Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage

Action Name	Action Key	Impact
Enhance Financial Aid Transparency	Action 16	1
Finalize Analysis on Tuition Table Revisions	Action 17	6
Boost Scholarship, Merit Award, and Grant Offerings	Action 18	7
Improve UCCS Brand Awareness/ Intentional and Cohesive Branding	Action 19	6
Increase Program Visibility	Action 20	1

Strategic Imperative 5: Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care

Action Name	Action Key	Impact
Assess and Adjust Business Practices /Identify Key Student Barriers	Action 21	7
Research Best Practices for Innovative Programming	Action 22	2
Mental Health and Wellness Resources/ Wellness Campus Identity	Action 23	6

Strategic Imperative 5: Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care

Action Name	Action Key	Impact
Holistic Wellness Campus" Wellness Champion Stipends AA	Action 24	1
Simplify Administrative Processes	Action 25	7
Review and Adjust Policies That Impact Underrepresented Students	Action 26	4
Launch Student Advocacy and Support Initiatives	Action 27	5
Expand/Maintain Nearpeer Usage	Action 28	7
Create Vibrant Campus Spaces	Action 29	6

Technology Recommendations

Launch AI Recruiter	Action 30	10
Launch AI Advisor	Action 31	10
Invest in Smart Scheduling	Action 32	10
Edvisorly/Edify/EAB Transfer Platform	Action 33	4
CRM Development for Efficiency*	Action 34	5

Technology Recommendations

A key strategy highlighted throughout this report is the recommendation to invest in technology that enhances the student experience while also increasing operational efficiency. The SEP steering committee has thoroughly explored several tools and is ready to present detailed information on their respective costs and benefits.

1. Launch AI

Tools like the CollegeVine AI Recruiter and AI Advisor have the potential to increase efficiency in offices, allowing current staff to adopt high touch practices to improve student satisfaction. AI will personalize messaging and guidance, improve holistic student communication, and provide 24-7 support for the application process, the advising process, and the financial aid process.

AI Chatbot Development for Student Self-Service

Implementing an intelligent chatbot will provide students with 24/7 access to information and support for frequently asked questions, reducing response times and freeing up staff for more complex inquiries. This self-service option enhances personalized and targeted communication directly related to student experiences and increases operational efficiency by streamlining routine communications.

By adopting these technological solutions, UCCS can create a more supportive and efficient environment that is available to students 24 hours per day. AI addresses the ever-changing needs of our student population. These investments will address staff burnout, but more importantly, contribute to higher retention rates, higher new student recruitment yield, improved student satisfaction, and operational effectiveness, aligning with our broader strategic goals.

2. Smart Scheduling Solution

Smart scheduling practices leverage data analytics to optimize course scheduling, maximize classroom utilization and minimize scheduling conflicts. By improving the efficiency of course offerings, we can better align with student demand, which leads to improved enrollment rates and a smoother academic experience for students. Using our current AdAstra analytics platform, we have observed a significant return on investment in the past 4 semesters. Adding additional smart scheduling practices will optimize these improvements.

3. Nearpeer: The "Find Your People" Platform

Nearpeer facilitates connections among incoming students before they arrive on campus, fostering an early community bond. This early engagement can enhance retention rates by helping students form relationships and support networks from day one, ultimately contributing to a stronger institutional identity.

4. Edvisorly/Edify for Transfer Student Processing and Service

These platforms streamline the transfer process, making it easier for prospective students to navigate admissions, credit evaluations, and advising. By enhancing the transfer experience, we can attract and retain more transfer students, a vital demographic for UCCS's enrollment goals.

5. CRM Application Development Support

Investing in an efficient CRM and marketing platform will improve our customer relationship management capabilities, enabling personalized outreach and data-driven decision-making. Enhanced communication tools will facilitate better student engagement throughout their academic journey, leading to improved student satisfaction and retention.

Implementation and Accountability

The UCCS Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (2025-2030) outlines the institution's direction for growth, student success, and financial stability. The implementation plan (Appendix A) translates strategy into outcomes by defining activities, assigning action owners, and allocating resources necessary to achieve the desired outcomes set by the Executive Leadership Team.

The plan is structured around five key strategic imperatives, each addressing critical areas of enrollment management and student experience:

1. **Improve UCCS Student Journeys**
2. **Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways**
3. **Reimagine the Recruitment & Admissions Experience**
4. **Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage**
5. **Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care**

For each imperative, specific action steps are mapped out, responsibilities are assigned, timelines are provided, resources are allocated, and key performance indicators (KPIs) are established. The overarching goal is to foster a culture of data-informed decision-making, student-centered practices, and innovation to ensure UCCS remains competitive and committed to student success.

Actions are designed to be dynamic, allowing for adjustments as new challenges and opportunities arise. UCCS will rely on continuous assessment, cross-departmental collaboration, and resilience to ensure successful execution. By empowering each department to take ownership of its role, the plan aims to enhance the student experience, support academic excellence, and secure UCCS's position as a leading institution in higher education.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Desired Outcomes, and Success Metrics

To evaluate the success of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, we will continuously assess the impact of the action steps on key performance measures. These measures and metrics are directly and indirectly linked to planning actions and reflect performance goals set by the University of Colorado System, which often influence annual institutional funding.

While the committee has defined KPIs and baselines, setting goals should be a campus-wide effort guided by emerging priorities and shared governance. Appendix C includes a detailed table of KPIs, justifications for their use, and recommendations for establishing baselines and benchmarks. The subsequent tables provide basic metrics to track our progress toward goals. However, the committee recommends refining and expanding success metrics for each project as we implement actions.

Table 10: KPI Area Enrollment and Retention

KPI Area: Enrollment and Retention Improvement

Success Metrics	Campus Goal	Change from Baseline	Target Date
Student Retention FT-FY	73%	+6% increase	2030
Student Retention Transfer	78%	+2% increase	2027
Student Retention for Nearpeer Users	Greater than Campus Rate	2024-25 Baseline	2027
Student Year-Over-Year Persistence (All)	Population Specific	2024-25 Baseline	2030
Online Student Credit Hours	99,000 Annual	+6% increase	2026
Course Waitlists	Elimination	Greater than -3% decrease	2028
Transfer Student Incoming Cohort	918	+10% increase (N= +91)	2027
Concurrent Enrollment	Pending Baseline	Baseline 2024-2025	2030
Fall Enrollment Headcount*	10,569 (flat) /10,463 (-1%)	-1% decrease	2026
Increase in Student Support**	Advising Ratio < 250:1	340 to 1	2027
Student Satisfaction Rating (NSSE)***	Mean 34.4	Mean 31.3	2025-2026
Student Reported Barriers	Pending Baseline	Baseline 2024-2025	2026
Utilization Non-Emergency Wellness	Pending Baseline	Baseline 2024-2025	2030
Accelerated Degree Program	Develop and Launch		2026
Credit for Prior Learning	Launch		2027
Micro-Credentials	Launch		2025
Stackable Credentials	Launch		2026

*Expectation of outcomes without rapid intervention based on 3-YR moving avg.
**Investing in technology and/or staffing can provide student support. This KPI could shift depending on the forthcoming assessment presented through our partnership with the National Institute for Student Success.
***Satisfaction measured through the NSSE supportive Environment Construct for FY Students.

Table 11: KPI Area Student Recruitment

KPI Area: Student Recruitment Performance

Success Metrics	Campus Goal	Change from Baseline	Target Date
FY-FT App Yield (applied to admit)	85%	+1.5% increase	2026
FY-FT App Conversion Rate (admitted to enrolled)	15%	+1.8% increase	2026
Transfer App Yield (applied to admit)	85%	+10.7% increase	2027
Transfer App Conversion Rate (admitted to enrolled)	52%	+5.1% increase	2027
Grad. App Yield (apply to admit)	Pending	Baseline Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Grad. App Conversion Rate (admitted to enrolled)	Pending	Baseline Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Reduce Application Processing Time UG	Greater than 24 hours for undergraduates	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2026
Reduce Application Processing Time UG*	Qualified auto-admit.	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2026
Reduce Application Processing Time GRAD	Reduce Time	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2026
Connections w/ Prospects (Nearpeer).	Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2026
New Student Welcome Center	Launch		2030

*Criteria to be outlined by AA

Table 12: KPI Market Position

KPI Area: Market Position

Success Metrics	Campus Goal	Change from Baseline	Target Date
Website Traffic	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Social Media Engagement	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Request for Information (RFIs)	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Marketing Click-through Rates	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Brand Awareness Score	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Brand Tracking	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Community Partnerships	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Community Campus Event Participation	Incremental Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030

Table 13: KPI Area Fiscal Health

KPI Area: Fiscal Health

Success Metrics	Campus Goal	Change from Baseline	Target Date
Fill-rates for Residence Life	Greater than or equal to 95%	Increase +17.5%	2026
# of Campus-wide Tuition Categories	Pending Analysis	Decrease	2026
Course Capacity	Enrollment Ratio equal to 85%	Increase +13.5%	2025-2030
Cost of Instruction	Reduction	Pending	2025-2030
Fundraising for Student Support	Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Total Scholarship and Merit Awards	Increase	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Institutional Revenue	Increase	Inflation + growth	2025-2030

Table 14: KPI Comprehensive Student Profile

KPI Area: Comprehensive Student Profile

Success Metrics	Campus Goal	Change from Baseline	Target Date
Average Student Loan Debt	Maintain greater than or equal to $25K	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Student Loan Default Rate	Maintain greater than or equal to 1.4%	Maintain	2025-2030
FAFSA Completion Rates	Greater than 74%	Baseline 2024-2025	2025-2030
Enrollment, Students of Color	Minority Serving Institution	Increase +6.4%	2025-2031
Enrollment, Hispanic/Latinx	Greater than or equal to 25%	Increase +4%	2025-2030
Enrollment, Military Affiliated	Greater than or equal to 23%	Maintain	2025-2030
Enrollment, First Generation	Greater than or equal to 30%	Increase of +8%	2030
Enrollment, Disability Serv.	Maintain 11%	Maintain current levels	2030
Enrollment, Pell Eligible	National Avg equals 32%	Increase +3%	2026
Enrollment, Post Traditional Age 25+	31% of undergraduates	Increase +9%	2030
Enrollment, Online Only	Baseline + 2% per AY	Increase +10.3%	2030

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The Strategic Enrollment Planning Steering Committee would like to thank the campus community for their support and contributions as we navigated the planning process.

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Appendix A: Implementation Plan

The action steps identified for implementation provide a starting point that guides UCCS leadership, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders towards strategic and sustainable growth.

Strategic Imperative 1: Improve UCCS Student Journeys

Objective:

Enhance the overall student experience by addressing barriers and improving engagement throughout the student journey.

Comprehensively Review the Student Journey:

Task: Map out the student experience from recruitment to graduation, identifying barriers and opportunities for improvement.

Owner: Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs (each office) coordinated by Strategic Enrollment Planning and Outreach.

Partners: Institutional Research.

Timeline: In process.

Resources: Student surveys, interviews with staff, technology for data collection.

KPIs: Student satisfaction scores, retention rates.

Implement Student Centered Admissions Policies:

Task: Review and update admissions policies to allow direct admission into chosen colleges and create flexible degree plans.

Owner: Admissions Office.

Partners: Provost and Deans.

Timeline: In process.

Resources: Admissions data, faculty input.

KPIs: Enrollment growth, first-year student persistence rates, Application Processing time, and application.

Collaborate with University Advancement for Targeted Fundraising:

Task: Develop student journey personas and use these insights for fundraising campaigns.

Owner: University Advancement, Marketing & Communications.

Partners: Financial Aid & Institutional Research.

Timeline: Pending confirmation of priorities.

Resources: Donor database, fundraising tools, community outreach.

KPIs: Funds raised, student support program development, scholarship development dollars. to admit conversion rates.

Metrics for Success:

- Increase student retention to 72% by 2030.
- Increase student satisfaction ratings incrementally as measured through the National Survey for Student Success.
- Increase staffing in critical student support programs by 2026.

Strategic Imperative 2: Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways

Objective:
Expand flexible learning options and high-demand programming to attract non-traditional students, including online, HyFlex, and hybrid programs.

ACTION STEP 1

Expand Online Programs and Credentials:

Task: Develop additional online courses, micro-credentials, and degree programs that appeal to adult learners, transfer students, and graduate students.

Owner: Academic Affairs.

Partners: The Office of Strategic Initiatives, Strategic Enrollment Planning and Outreach, Faculty Resource Center.

Timeline: In process, additional support is pending confirmation of priorities.

Resources: Faculty incentives, online support, and marketing investment.

KPIs: Growth in online enrollment, number of new online programs.

ACTION STEP 2

Develop Flexible and Modern Degree Programs for All Student Populations:

Task: Create flexible degree tracks and seamless bachelor-to-graduate pathways.

Owner: Academic Affairs and Dept/College/Campus Curriculum Committees.

Partners: Institutional Research and the Strategy Units.

Timeline: Pending confirmation of priorities.

Resources: Faculty workload assessments, demand analysis, curriculum design through the Faculty Development Center.

KPIs: Number of students enrolled in accelerated programs, number of accelerated programs.

ACTION STEP 3

Develop the Adult Learner Pipeline:

Task: Develop direct program pathways to serve adult learners.

Task: Develop messaging and personas that compel adult learners.

Task: Develop an efficient credit for prior learning/ experience policy.

Owner: Academic Affairs, Admissions and Recruitment.

Partners: Strategic Enrollment Planning and Outreach, Academic Affairs, the Graduate School.

Timeline: Goal for December 2030.

Resources: Community Partnerships, Marketing, Marketing and Outreach for Digital Instruction, the Graduate School.

KPIs: Number of post-traditional students enrolled, increases in flexible programming.

ACTION STEP 4

Strengthen High School to College Pipeline:

Task: Evaluate the pipeline process to create improvements in direct and assured admissions processes.

Task: Expand dual enrollment and concurrent programs, provide improved advising and student outreach.

Task: Increase participation in the CU Pre-Collegiate Development Program in Southern Colorado.

Owner: Admissions and Recruitment.

Partners: Academic Advising, Pre-Collegiate Development Program, Academic Affairs.

Timeline: Goal for December 2025.

Resources: High school partnerships with Admissions and Recruitment, Pre-Collegiate Development, academic advisors.

KPIs: Number of high school students enrolled, conversion rate to full-time enrollment.

Metrics for Success:

- Increase in online program student credit hours by +6% by fall semester 2026.

- Launch of 1 new accelerated degree program by the fall semester of 2025.

- Increase concurrent, PCDP, and dual enrollment by +3% for fall semester 2025.

- Cultivate concurrent enrollment from communities in Southern Colorado in the fall semester of 2026.

Strategic Imperative 3: Reimagine the Recruitment & Admissions Experience

Objective:
The goal is to redesign the recruitment and admissions process to improve transparency, student engagement, and application processing efficiency.

ACTION STEP 1

Assess and Streamline Recruitment and Admissions Processes:

Task: Review existing recruitment efforts, admissions business practices, create customized student communication journeys, and improve the admissions timing.

Owner: Office of Admissions and Recruitment.

Partners: Marketing & Communications, Strategic Enrollment Planning and Outreach, Institutional Research.

Timeline: December 2025.

Resources: CRM system admissions staff training, process optimization/automation.

KPIs: Application yield, conversion rates, student satisfaction with onboarding.

ACTION STEP 2

Launch a Centralized UCCS Welcome Center:

Task: Scope and perform a needs assessment for the design to establish a central Welcome Center to enhance campus visits and improve the first impression for all prospective student groups (adult learners, transfer students, traditional students, and community members.

Owner: Facilities Management.

Partners: Budget Office, Admissions Office, Advising Office, and Orientation Office.

Timeline: Needs assessment completed and analyzed by the end of December in 2026. Center completion dates are funding dependent.

Resources: Budget allocation, architectural design.

KPIs for completed center: Visitor satisfaction scores, campus tour participation rates, admit to enrollment yield rates.

ACTION STEP 3

Improve the Transfer Student Admissions Process:

Task: Streamline transfer credit evaluation and improve self-service advising options for prospective transfer students.

Owner: Transfer Admissions Office.

Partners: Registrar's Office, Admissions and Recruitment, Academic Advising.

Timeline: Fall semester of 2025.

Resources: Transfer articulation tools, staff resources, credit for prior learning policy.

KPIs: Transfer application completion rates, transfer student enrollment.

Metrics for Success:

- .5% improvement in application yield for the fall semester of 2025.
- Launch of the UCCS Welcome Center by the start of January in 2030.
- +10% increase in transfer student enrollment for the fall semester of 2027.
- Increase the undergraduate enrollment for adult learners.

Strategic Imperative 4: Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage

Objective:
Enhance affordability and simplify financial aid to improve student recruitment, retention, and competitive positioning.

ACTION STEP 1

Enhance Financial Aid Transparency:

Task: Simplify the financial aid process, including creating user-friendly tools for estimating costs.

Owner: Financial Aid Office.

Partners: Marketing.

Timeline: The beginning of the fall semester in 2026.

Resources: Financial aid tools, website updates acceptance materials.

Cost: Revenue neutral for tuition and fees.

KPIs: Increased FAFSA completion rates, reduction in student debt.

ACTION STEP 2

Finalize Analysis on Tuition Table Revisions:

Task: Evaluate proposed tuition and fee models to ensure the proposed changes are revenue neutral.

Task: Present the tuition structure proposal to the CU Board of Regents and Legislature for approval and implementation.

Owner: University Budget Office.

Partners: Financial Aid, Student Financial Services, CU System.

Timeline: Between FY 2026 and FY 2027.

Resources: Budget Office. Institutional Research.

KPIs: Increased persistence, increased pricing transparency.

ACTION STEP 3

Boost Scholarship, Merit Award, and Grant Offerings:

Task: Launch targeted fundraising campaigns to increase scholarships, merit awards, and grant funds, with an emphasis on underserved populations.

Owner: University Advancement.

Partners: Financial Aid.

Timeline: May 2024 - December 2025.

Resources: Donor relations, financial aid office.

KPIs: Growth in scholarships awarded, average scholarship amount, Increased FAFSA completion rates, reduced loan awards.

ACTION STEP 4

Improve UCCS Brand Awareness:

Task: Increase targeted marketing efforts across Colorado, specifically, in Southern Colorado, Southern Denver, mountain communities, and rural communities, focusing on UCCS's value proposition and affordability.

Owner: Marketing & Communications.

Partners: Academic Affairs, Admissions and Recruitment, University Advancement.

Timeline: December 2025.

Resources: Marketing budget, community outreach programs.

KPIs: Website traffic, brand awareness surveys, increased organic admission leads.

Metrics for Success:

- Increase the endowed private scholarships offers and institutional merit admissions awards incrementally for students enrolling in the fall semester of 2025 through the fall of 2030.

- Maintain average student loan debt of less than $25K from 2025 through 2030.

- Increase in brand awareness scores by +5% by the fall semester of 2027.

- Reduced number of campus-wide tuition categories.

Strategic Imperative 5: Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care

Objective:

Strengthen the support system for students through improved student care initiatives, fostering a sense of place and success.

ACTION STEP 1

Research Best Practices for Innovative Programming:

Task: Provide additional resources and incentives to Academic Affairs to implement best practices for teaching and learning, inclusion, resilience, and student wellbeing into curriculum and course management.

Owner: Academic Affairs.

Partners: Institutional Research, the Office of Strategic Initiatives.

Timeline: Immediate.

Resources: Faculty Resource Center, Professional Associations, Academic Assessment Models.

KPIs: DFW Rates, Graduation Rates, Student Faculty Engagement, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

ACTION STEP 2

Become a Health & Wellness Promoting Institution:

- **Task:** Pursue adoption of the Okangan Charter.

- **Task:** Increase access to mental health services, including telehealth options. Provide resource lists for student-facing offices to share during all interactions. Use AI to direct students to resources for immediate help if they reach out while in crisis.

- **Owner:** The Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

- **Partners:** Academic Affairs, the Office of Strategic Initiatives.

- **Timeline:** In Process.

- **Resources:** Counseling staff, telehealth software, AI Recruiter, Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience, the toolkit for wellness developed for faculty use in the classroom, expanded community partnerships.

- **KPIs:** Student satisfaction with wellness services, utilization rates, increased FTE for support services.

ACTION STEP 3

Identify Key Barriers:

- **Task:** Conduct surveys, focus groups, and data analysis to identify the most common institutional barriers students face (e.g., registration holds, confusing degree requirements, financial aid disbursement delays).

- **Owner:** The Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

- **Partners:** Office of Institutional Research, the Office of Strategic Initiatives.

- **Timeline:** In process.

- **Resources:** Student feedback, institutional data, faculty, and staff input.

- **KPIs:** Number of identified barriers, student feedback on accessibility.

ACTION STEP 4

Simplify Administrative Processes:

- **Task:** Review and streamline key administrative processes, such as registration, course enrollment, and financial aid applications, to eliminate unnecessary steps and improve clarity.

- **Owner:** Each Department is responsible for streamlining processes that occur in their area: Registrar's Office, Admissions Office, Academic Affairs, Financial Aid Office, IT Department.

- **Partners:** Students will be asked about their experiences.

- **Timeline:** In process.

- **Resources:** Process mapping tools, workflow automation technology, contractors or faculty who can lead the process improvement efforts, student focus groups.

- **KPIs:** Reduction in processing times, student satisfaction scores, decrease in registration/financial aid delays, reduced number of stop-outs.

ACTION STEP 5

Redesign the Website to Create Communication Hub/Recruitment Engine:

- **Task:** Develop a central online hub where students can easily access information about policies, deadlines, and support services. Ensure the platform is mobile-friendly and available in multiple languages.

- **Owner:** Office of Information Technology.

- **Partners:** Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, IT Department, Marketing & Communications.

- **Timeline:** Pending confirmation of priorities.

- **Resources:** Website design team, student service representatives, student testers, web design work group.

- **KPIs:** Increase in traffic to the hub, reduced student inquiries about common issues, positive user feedback.

ACTION STEP 6

Review and Adjust Policies That Impact Students with Outcome Gaps:

Task: Work with the Office of Strategic Initiatives to review existing policies (e.g., tuition payment deadlines, housing down payments, withdrawal policies, registration timing, waitlist outcomes) that disproportionately affect these student populations.

Owner: Office of Strategic Initiatives, Financial Aid Office, Institutional Research, Legal Counsel, Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

Timeline: In process, additional work pending confirmation of priorities.

Resources: The Office of Strategic Initiatives, policy review committee, data analysis.

KPIs: Number of policies revised, increase in persistence rates, increased enrollment for under-enrolled and first-generation students.

ACTION STEP 7

Launch Student Advocacy and Support Initiatives:

Task: Establish dedicated student support workgroup or committee that assists students in navigating institutional challenges and advocates for policy changes.

Owner: Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

Partners: Academic Affairs and Administration and Finance.

Timeline: Pending confirmation of priorities.

Resources: Student support staff, representation of all divisions.

KPIs: Number of students supported, reduced complaints related to institutional barriers, student retention rates.

Metrics for Success:

- Reduction in student-reported barriers by 2027, target is pending baseline measurements.

- -3% reduction in course waitlists by 2026.

- Increase in student satisfaction, using responses from the NSSE survey and the NCHA survey responses, with administrative processes by calendar year 2026.

- +6% increase in retention rates of students by 2030.

ACTION STEP 8

Expand Nearpeer Usage:

Task: Analyze current usage rates of Nearpeer and collect feedback from students, faculty, and staff on the platform's strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Timeline:** February 2025.
- **Resources:** Usage data, enrollment data, focus groups.
- **KPIs:** Current engagement rates and qualitative data.

Task: Create marketing and outreach campaigns to raise awareness of Nearpeer's benefits among incoming students, transfer students, and groups with achievement gaps. Incorporate Nearpeer into recruitment and orientation processes.

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Partners:** Marketing & Communications, Admissions Office, Orientation Teams.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing.
- **Resources:** Social media, email campaigns and journeys, orientation support.
- **KPIs:** Increase in Nearpeer signups and daily active users, engagement pre-term and during orientation sessions.

Task: Embed Nearpeer into the admissions process, allowing prospective FT-FY and transfer students to connect with current students, faculty, and staff based on shared academic or extracurricular interests.

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Partners:** Admissions Office.
- **Timeline:** February 2025.
- **Resources:** CRM integration, admissions staff training, UIS support.
- **KPIs:** Increase in prospective student engagement, higher application completion rates for Nearpeer users.

Task: Evaluate the return on investment of Nearpeer to determine the benefits of offering the program to all new and continuing students to increase campus engagement and student connection.

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Partners:** Admissions Office.
- **Timeline:** February 2025.
- **Resources:** Institutional Research, Student Communications, the Office of Strategic Initiatives.
- **KPIs:** Increase in continuing student engagement, increased persistence rates for Nearpeer users.

Task: Promote Nearpeer as a tool for academic collaboration (e.g., study groups, project teams) and professional networking (e.g., connecting students with faculty and alumni in similar fields).

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Partners:** Alumni Association, Career Services.
- **Timeline:** Fall 2026.
- **Resources:** Academic advisors, career mentors, alumni network.
- **KPIs:** Higher rates of academic support group participation, increased networking between students and alumni.

Task: Regularly review usage data, engagement metrics, and student outcomes related to Nearpeer participation to identify areas for ongoing improvement.

- **Owner:** Enrollment Strategy and Outreach.
- **Partners:** Institutional Research.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing, with quarterly reviews starting December 2024.
- **Resources:** Data analytics tools, student feedback.
- **KPIs:** Increase in user retention, improved student satisfaction, and retention rates.

Metrics for Success:

- +20% increase in Nearpeer signups and daily active users by the end of 2025.
- Higher engagement among first year and transfer students during orientation and onboarding.
- Increased connections between current students, alumni, and prospective students via Nearpeer.
- Enhanced student satisfaction with academic and social support systems.
- Improved fill-rates for Residence Life and Housing.
- Improved participation in campus events.

Appendix B: Hispanic-Serving Institution Initiative

Overview

Aligned with the Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP), the Office of Strategic Initiatives, in collaboration with Institutional Research and the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, has developed a strategic enrollment and retention initiative focused on strengthening community partnerships across Colorado to expand recruitment opportunities and support long-term enrollment growth. This initiative not only fosters an intentional culture of care for all students, but also enhances retention, ensuring that students persist and thrive at UCCS. Through this multi-year initiative, the University is strategically positioning itself to increase overall enrollment, create a thriving culture of care, and as an outcome of these overall efforts to achieve a federal Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined in federal legislation, are colleges and universities with at least 25% full-time undergraduate Hispanic enrollment and a high concentration of Pell Grant recipients. Since their official recognition in 1992, HSIs have played a vital role in expanding access to higher education and advancing student success, particularly in regional research institutions like UCCS. Colorado's Hispanic population is a strong contributor to the economic viability of the state. With a current Hispanic undergraduate enrollment of 21.37% and 34% of students receiving Pell Grants, UCCS is on the path to becoming an HSI and preparing students for the workforce needs of the near future.

This initiative is also a proactive response to the looming higher education enrollment cliff as outlined in the SEP, driven by declining birth rates and shifting demographics. Institutions across the country face a projected decrease in the traditional college-aged population, requiring innovative approaches to sustain and grow enrollment. By expanding access, fostering retention, and strengthening pathways for non-traditional and underserved students, this initiative directly mitigates the challenges of the enrollment cliff, ensuring long-term institutional stability. Findings in national research demonstrate that HSIs with intentional strategies experience higher retention, graduation, and post-graduate success rates across all student demographics.

This targeted plan supports UCCS's desire to create a culture of care by fostering a thriving campus community for all its students. This strategic roadmap ensures that UCCS's journey toward HSI designation is a transformative, student-centered commitment embedded at every level of the institution, leading to meaningful enrollment growth and sustained student success. This multi-year initiative, aligned with the broader Strategic Enrollment Plan, serves as a blueprint for student-centered outreach, enrollment, and retention strategies.

Primary Objectives

To ensure success, UCCS will aim to:

- Engage the campus community in the commitment and focus of UCCS becoming a Servingness Institution centered on a continuum of care for all students.

- Create a comprehensive plan to create a campus of servingness for all students.

- Deliver high-impact student focused practices centering on a culture of care.

- Develop community development strategies to engage across Colorado to build trusting and community orientated relationships.

- Build intentional partnerships with organizations, local schools, and institutions throughout Colorado Springs and Colorado.

- Allocate financial and campus resources to enhance this initiative.

Driven by the Five Key Imperatives of the UCCS Strategic Enrollment Plan:

1. **Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care.**

2. **Improve Student Journeys.**

3. **Modernize Non-Traditional Student Pathways.**

4. **Reimagine Recruitment and Admissions.**

5. **Improve Affordability and Competitive Advantage.**

Alignment with UCCS's Enrollment Priorities:

This initiative directly supports the University's enrollment priorities.

Growth Priorities:

1. **Expand recruitment pool:** By leveraging the Servingness model and targeted outreach, actively connect with communities across Colorado to attract a broader range of prospective students.

2. **Strategic and sustainable enrollment growth to represent the communities of Colorado:** Prioritize enrollment growth to align with state demographics and ensure access for all students.

3. **Graduate student enrollment growth:** Strengthen pathways for students to transition seamlessly into graduate programs.

4. **Online student credit hour growth:** Modernize non-traditional education options by growing online and hybrid course offerings to meet evolving student needs.

5. **Focus on community and affinity to reduce disparity in academic performance:** Enhance student support networks and cultivate a culture of care to reduce disparities in academic performance.

6. **Increased persistence, retention, and completion rates:** Provide wraparound support services that help students stay on track and successfully complete their degrees.

7. **Faculty, staff, and facilities expansion to support strategic sustainable growth:** Invest in personnel and infrastructure to sustain strategic growth and meet the needs of a growing student body.

Fiscal Priorities:

1. **Stable revenue growth:** Implement sustainable enrollment strategies and retention initiatives to maintain financial stability.

2. **Boost scholarship and financial aid package offerings to increase competitiveness:** Strengthen affordability strategies to ensure UCCS remains attainable to prospective and current students.

3. **Manage and acquire institutional aid:** Secure federal HSI funding and build partnerships to expand financial aid opportunities.

4. **Invest in programming (both academic and support), which has a measurable impact on enrollment growth and student success:** Data driven funding toward academic and student support programs that drive enrollment growth and student success.

5. **Brand Awareness and Reputation:**

6. **Improvements and growth in brand development, marketing activity, and web traffic:** Enhance marketing efforts to reinforce UCCS's identity as a student-centered institution.

7. **Expanded business partnerships:** Build stronger connections with local employers and organizations to support career readiness, community and alumni engagement.

8. **Alumni engagement and reengagement:** Foster lifelong connections by reengaging alumni and strengthening their ties to UCCS.

9. **Student career readiness:** Provide comprehensive career development support to ensure graduates are ready for the workforce.

Tiered Action Plan (3-5 Years)

PHASE 1:

Research & Mapping (Spring 2025)

- Research foundational frameworks of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) & Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (eHSI).

- Review & meet with HSIs and eHSIs both nationally and across Colorado.

- Review HSI & eHSI best practices and processes.

- Conduct feedback meetings with campus stakeholders in Hispanic student, faculty, and staff support.

- Develop a draft HSI proposal for campus leadership.

- Align the HSI proposal into the Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP).

PHASE 2:

Foundational Work (Fall 2025) – Data collection, infrastructure development, and awareness-building.

- Develop and launch the HSI working group with representatives from students, faculty, staff, and community stakeholders.

- Design a comprehensive institutional self-assessment using the Servingness in HSIs Framework and align it with the SEP and servingness for all students.

- The working group will conduct the self-assessment and develop the first draft of the campus-wide HSI plan.

- Engage with students, faculty, and staff in focus groups to understand what a culture of care at UCCS encompasses.

- Create a community development strategy plan to engage with local and statewide communities.

- Establish partnerships with local organizations and institutions.

- Build a 3-year progressive budget plan and identify funding opportunities to support the initiative.

PHASE 3:

Institutional Implementation (2026) – Curriculum reform, faculty/staff development, student support.

- Present self-assessment and focus group findings to campus leadership.

- Develop a comprehensive HSI plan based on self-assessment and focus groups findings with core priorities and high-impact practices.

- Launch HSI Taskforce Working Group to work on the core focus areas of the HSI plan.

- Launch the community development strategy in target recruitment areas as outlined in the SEP.

- Continue to establish and maintain partnerships with local organizations and institutions.

- Continue to develop a 3-year progressive budget plan and identify funding opportunities to support HSI initiatives.

- Develop core outcomes for each core focus area and accountability metrics.

PHASE 4:

Sustainable Impact (2027-Ongoing) – Long-term policy shifts, securing external funding, and accountability structures.

- Pilot core focus area initiatives

- Establish accountability metrics and reporting structures to track progress

- Institutionalize policies that embed servingness across all areas, including governance and strategic planning.

- Secure recurring funding to sustain HSI initiatives beyond the initial transformation phase.

- Continue to establish and maintain partnerships with organizations and institutions.

- If the 25% threshold is met, apply for federal designation HSI status and federal grants.

Appendix C: KPI Recommendations

KPIs, with the justification for use, and recommendations for establishing baselines and benchmarks

Key Performance Indicators with recommendations for baselines

Student Recruitment Performance	
KPI: Improvement to the admissions funnel (application, yield, and enrollment for new first-time first-year, transfer, and graduate students).	
3-Year Moving Average Baseline	**KPI Explanation**
Freshmen Applications: 15,684 Admits: 13,107 Enrolled: 1,736 **Transfers** Applications: 2,412 Admits: 1,795 Enrolled: 845 **Graduate** Applications: 1,404 Admits: 735 Enrolled: 469 Recommend using a 3-year moving average baseline to adjust for program changes and evolving recruitment strategies.	• Application numbers are optimized (EAB, 2024), particularly for freshmen. • Maintain current ratio of apps/admits. • Increase enrollment numbers for transfers & graduate students. • Maintain freshmen enrollment numbers, this population may see decreases due to national/state trends, so maintenance of current numbers is desirable .

KPI: Increased credit hours generated by student residency exception.

3-Year Moving Average Baseline	KPI Explanation
Undergraduate: 239,915 SCH • National Student Exchange: 115 SCH • Presidential Scholars: 2000 SCH • Beth-El Online Non-Res: 74 SCH • Online Non-Res: 410 SCH • WUE: 10,945 SCH • Extended Studies: 53 SCH • Memorial Cohort: 35 SCH • Non-Res: 20,989 SCH • Online Res: 1,588 SCH • Resident: 203,600 SCH **Graduate** • Beth-El Online Non-Res: 365 SCH • Online Non-Res: 539 SCH • Non-Res: 2,829 SCH • Online Res: 125 SCH • Resident: 24,489 SCH Recommend using 3-year moving average using fiscal year totals and all hours.	**Residency Exceptions directly impact fiscal year total revenue.** • National Student Exchange pay $0 tuition. • Presidential Scholars may be non-resident students but pay 110% of resident tuition. • WUE students are non-resident, but pay 150% of resident tuition. **Monitoring credit hours is critical for UCCS due to different tuition rates.** • Headcount may stay flat or even decrease, but increased credit hours indicates increased revenue. • Higher Education studies show students enrolled full-time retain better than those enrolled part-time. **Recommendation: adjust baseline when tuition tables are simplified.**

KPI: Increased headcount: graduate, undergraduate, and total

3-Year Moving Average Baseline	KPI Explanation
Fall Semester enrollments for students enrolled for credit at UCCS **Enrollment Viz:** Undergraduate: 9,647 Graduate: 1,965 Total: 11,612 **Recommend Goals:** Undergraduate: 9,600 Graduate: 1,900 Total: 11,500 Recommend using 3-year moving average to adjust for program changes and evolving recruitment strategies.	**UCCS enrollment decreased from fall 2021.** • Indicators in Higher Education show that growth in new students may be challenging, leading to potential program changes, and evolving recruitment strategies, potentially increasing graduate population or non-traditional populations. Long-term impacts of those changes on headcount are undetermined at this time. • Stabilizing enrollment size assists in managing appropriate staffing, resources, and facilities. Recommended goals based on stabilization of total enrollments to benchmark programs, policies, and resourcing; future goals could then focus on targeted growth.

KPI: Improved student persistence & retention

3-Year Moving Average Baseline	KPI Explanation
Persistence: Students enrolled in fall semester who enroll in the following Spring semester • First-time full-time freshmen: 87% • Transfer: 87% **1-Year Retention:** Students enrolled in fall semester who enroll in the following fall semester • First-time full-time freshmen:67% • Transfer: 76% **3-Year Retention:** Students enrolled in fall semester who enroll in third fall semester (or complete) • First-time full-time freshmen: 53% • Transfer: 62% Recommend using 3-year moving average to adjust for program changes and evolving recruitment strategies.	Retention for first-time full-time freshmen & transfer students are reported to IPEDS, CDHE, System. • These cohorts are built/maintained by IR office for tracking purposes. • Graduate student cohorts to be built in AY25. Additional years can be monitored using Freshmen Viz and Transfer Viz. Monitoring specific persistence/retention for cohorts allows for further study to determine appropriate variables for in-depth retention analysis; allows institution to understand factors that impact persistence and retention and identify potential barriers to success.

KPI: Increased high school concurrent enrollment and number of high school pipeline programs

3-Year Moving Average Baseline	KPI Explanation
Resident Instruction (Main Campus) 4 Students **All Other Instruction (Extended Studies)** 1,646 Students **Number of High School Pipeline Programs** • Recommend using end-of-fiscal-year 2024 total as a baseline. • Recommend using 3-year moving average and spring semester totals (end-of-term only).	• Reporting for Colorado Department of Higher Education puts high school students into Resident Instruction and All Other Instruction; recommend monitoring these totals to align with reporting requirements. • Inbound high school student population can be monitored using High School Student Viz. • Historical trends to be built into visualization in AY24-25 by IR. • Focused effort in AY23-24 to increase number of pipeline programs, using prior year totals would skew baseline.

KPI: Reduced advising loads

3-Year Moving Average Baseline	KPI Explanation
Possible consideration: Increased number of bilingual or multilingual advisors to support emphasis on Hispanic student population	• National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) standard is 300 students per academic advisor. • EAB recommends 250 students per academic advisor. • Due to the increased need for personalized support to students as well as potentially higher at-risk student population, recommendation is set at 250 students.

Broaden the Student Profile

KPI: Improved financial aid profile of enrolled students

FY25 Baseline Recommendation	KPI Explanation
• The percentage of students with low Student Aid Index (SAI) • The percentage of Federal Pell eligible students • The percentage of middle-income students with no grant aid • The percentage of students completing the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) Recommend using FY25 as a baseline based on new FAFSA and resulting data changes. Note: Percentage of Pell Eligible Students for FY 24 is 29%.	• New FAFSA changed what data is provided to the institution and what can be used for reporting, recommend using this current fiscal year to set baselines for future year comparisons/tracking. • SAI is new to FY25. SAI is an index number to determine how much financial need a student has based on their eligibility. • Pell Eligibility is different based on new FAFSA, so prior years may not be powerful indicator of new year totals.

KPI: Broaden the student demographic profile

3-Year Moving Averages	KPI Explanation
Percentage of students identifying as Students of Color: 24% • Includes students identifying as: Asian, African American/Black, Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, American Indian/Native Alaskan, Hispanic, or Multi-racial **Percentage of Military Affiliated Students: 23%** • Includes Active Duty, Veteran, ROTC, and Dependents using Military/VA education benefits **Percentage of Students registered with Disability Services: 11%** **Percentage of Students identifying as First-Generation: 22%** • Designated as neither parent having completed a bachelor's degree Recommend using 3-year moving average as baselines; may need to adjust based on changing Department of Education race/ethnicity categories for out-years.	National trends for race/ethnicity indicate increasingly multi-racial student populations likely to attend University. • Changes to race/ethnicity options will require System-level changes to CU-SIS in coming years. • Recommend monitoring overall student race/ethnicity rather than specific groups as small populations may result in skewed percentages or misleading results when tracking changes over time. • Recommend researching local & market area demographic data for comparison to identify potential gaps. First-Generation population is currently determined using FAFSA and UCCS Application data. These metrics (and others) are available on the UCCS Term Enrollment Viz.

Improve Market Position

Recommend establishing baselines during AY24-25 year with total counts/percentages.

- Recommend using Program Demand Gap Analysis conducted by Lightcast in summer 2024 for benchmarks on specific programs/careers.
- Additional benchmarks can address the number/percentage of enrolled students by geographic area. Data for enrolled students are currently available at *https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/uccs.institutional.research/viz/Enrollments_16800989514290/Documentation* based on home address.

- UCCS market share
- Marketing click-rates
- Request for information inquiries
- UCCS brand awareness
- Website traffic
- Student satisfaction

KPI Explanation

- UCCS contracted Lightcast to conduct a Program Demand Gap Analysis (PDGA) in summer 2024. Results inform the development of appropriate market share benchmarks should then be addressed. Note that the PDGA addresses both El Paso County and Colorado for this analysis.
- Brand Awareness will require a baseline survey. This effort should be pursued in AY24-25 to determine current awareness and potential gaps in current branding and marketing efforts.

Stabilize Fiscal Health

KPI: Institutional revenue, cost of instruction, residence life occupancy rates, student debt at completion, and student loan default rates.

Current Baselines	KPI Explanation
Institutional Revenue FY23-24 Total: $326.4M **Cost of Instruction** Recommend development of Viz to provide insights into cost of instruction based on college, department, course, faculty, etc. **Residence Life fill rates** Recommend using Fall 2024 final fill rate as a baseline. **Student debt at completion** Class of 2021: $25,372 (57.5% of graduating class); Includes Federal Direct, consolidated Federal, and Federal Perkins loans. **Institutional default rates** 1.4% (FY19, see CU Affordability for long-term data trends) Recommend determining baselines during the 24-25 academic year.	• Recommend IR development of Tableau dashboard to provide insights into revenue, cost of instruction, and other expenditures by organization. • This effort will require time to develop and validate, but will provide meaningful insights in future years for organizational self-assessment. • Student debt and default rates may be proxy indicators for insufficient scholarships/grants/awards for enrolled students. Institution may consider including scholarship distribution/funding as a potential metric for future years.

Operationalize Assessment

KPI: Increase self-assessment of initiative progress and campus assessment for priority alignment, through annual reviews of progress and alignment of priorities.

Self-Assessment of initiative progress • Review of KPIs, Metrics, and overall Strategic Plan to validate elements and update as appropriate **Campus assessment for priority alignment** • Review of priorities to ensure alignment across campus, system, and state/federal guidelines	• Strategic Plans are successful when they drive change and lead to organizational process improvements. Through annual reviews of KPIs, metrics, and other elements of the Strategic Enrollment Plan, the plan becomes more dynamic as institutional needs and priorities change.

Appendix D: Estimated Implementation Costs

Description	Action	Estimated Costs	Start Date	Target Date	Recurring
Strategic Imperative 1: Improve UCCS Student Journeys					
Review Student Journey/ Streamline Admissions	Action 1	$	January 2025	August 2025	Y
Implement Student Centered Admissions Policies (Transfer and FT-FY)	Action 2	$	March 2025	August 2025	Y
Targeted Fundraising	Action 3	$ - $$$$$	January 2025	December 2030	Unknown
High School Concurrent Outreach	Action 4	$$	June 2024	December 2025	Y
HSI Status	Action 5	$$$$	August 2024	December 2028	Partial
Create a Culture of Self-Assessment	Action 6	$	January 2025	December 2030	Y
Strategic Imperative 2: Modernize Non-traditional Student Pathways					
Flexible Teaching Contracts	Action 10	$$$$$	Pending	December 2027	Y
Maintain Centralized MKTG for Online	Action 13	$$$$	August 2024	December 2030	Y
Expand Online Programs and Credentials	Action 7	$$ (annually)	August 2024	August 2026	Y
Develop Flexible and Modern Degree Programs	Action 8	$$$	January 2025	August 2025	Partial

Description	Action	Estimated Costs	Start Date	Target Date	Recurring
Strategic Imperative 3: Reimagine the Recruitment & Admissions Experience					
Create a UCCS Welcome Center	Action 11	$$$$$	January 2025	December 2030	N
Redesign the Website to Create Communication Hub/Recruitment Engine	Action 12 w	$	January 2025	June 2025	N
Direct Admissions into Program of Choice	Action 14	$	March 2025	August 2025	N
Strategic Name Buys	Action 15	$$ - $$$	FY 2025-2026	continuing	Y
Strengthen High School to College Pipeline	Action 9	$	August 2025	continuing	Y
Strategic Imperative 4: Improve Affordability & Competitive Advantage					
Enhance Financial Aid Transparency	Action 16	$	August 2024	continuing	Partial
Finalize Analysis on Tuition Table Revisions	Action 17	$	FY 2026	FY 2027	N
Boost Scholarship, Merit Award, and Grant Offerings	Action 18	$$$$	May 2024	December 2025	$140K per 1% increase
Improve UCCS Brand Awareness/ Intentional and Cohesive Branding	Action 19	$$$$	January 2025	December 2025	Y
Increase Program Visibility	Action 20	$	August 2025	December 2030	Y

Description	Action	Estimated Costs	Start Date	Target Date	Recurring
Strategic Imperative 5: Cultivate a Continuum of Student Care					
Assess and Adjust Business Practices /Identify Key Student Barriers	Action 21	$	January 2025	August 2025	N
Research Best Practices for Innovative Programming	Action 22	$	Pending	continuing	Partial
Expand Mental Health and Wellness Resources/ Wellness Campus Identity Development	Action 23	$$$$	Pending Funding	continuing	Y
Holistic Wellness Campus Wellness Champion Stipends AA	Action 24	$	May 2025	continuing	Y
Simplify Administrative Processes	Action 25	$	January 2025	August 2026	N
Review and Adjust Policies that Impact Underrepresented Students	Action 26	$	January 2025	continuing	Partial
Launch Student Advocacy & Support Initiatives	Action 27	$$$	August 2028	continuing	Y
Expand/Maintain Nearpeer Usage	Action 28	$	July 2024	August 2027	Y
Create Vibrant Campus Spaces	Action 29	$$$ - $$$$	Pending		Y
Technology Recommendations					
Launch AI Recruiter	Action 30	$$	January 2025	March 2025	Y
Launch AI Advisor	Action 31	$$	January 2025	March 2025	Y
Invest in Smart Scheduling	Action 32	$	August 2023	January 2026	Y
Edvisorly/Edify/EAB Transfer Platform	Action 33	$	August 2026	January 2027	Y
CRM Development for Efficiency*	Action 34	$$	January 2025	May 2025	Y

Appendix E: Opportunities for Growth

The Program Gap analysis provided by Lightcast highlights opportunities for institutional growth. In analyzing Colorado's projected annual job openings from 2023 to 2033 and comparing them with state and countywide educational program completions, Lightcast[1] identified key areas where educational growth could better meet workforce needs.

Lightcast identified 56 programmatic areas of opportunity at the bachelor's degree level, many of which are related to business and financial operations occupations. UCCS could adjust existing bachelor's degrees to meet this demand. Additionally, the

program demand gap analysis identified 21 areas of opportunity at the master's and doctoral degree levels, many of which are related to healthcare practitioners and technical occupations.

Tables 15 and 16 contain state and county employment gaps by Standard Occupational Classification system (SOC) for 2023. Gaps are defined by the deficit of credential completers compared to recorded job openings. The opportunities for growth are programs that have a high number of annual job openings but lack of adequate credential completers.

1   Lightcast. (2024). Program Demand Gap Analysis: Workforce Needs and Higher Education Opportunities in Colorado and El Paso County. Lightcast Economic Analyst Report.

Table 15: Annual Employment Gaps 2023 (Colorado)

CIP Title	Co Job Openings	Co. Completions	UCCS Completions	Gap
Employment opportunities for baccalaureate degree programming in Colorado				
Busn Administration & Management	15,384	5,176	343	10,207
Computer Science	2,517	975	81	1,542
Early Childhood Ed & Teaching	626	129	15	496
Human Services	630	163	26	467
Elementary Education & Teaching	630	385	67	245
Spanish Language & Literature	288	109	5	178
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	2,338	2,231	182	107
English Language & Literature	620	554	53	66
Visual & Performing Arts	97	48	48	49
Computer Engineering	97	49	10	48
Digital Comm & Media/Multimedia	94	66	3	29
Health Serv/Allied Health/Health Sci	150	126	48	24
Mathematics	439	417	25	22

CIP Title	Co Job Openings	Co. Completions	UCCS Completions	Gap
Employment opportunities for master's degree programming in Colorado				
Busn Administration & Management	5,158	2,095	109	3,063
Social Work	1,587	823	19	764
Computer Science	749	284	12	465
Engineering	382	122	32	260
Psychology	299	55	14	245
Computer & Information Sciences	396	158	1	238
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	347	148	62	198
Special Education & Teaching	393	214	22	178
Counselor Ed/School Coun & Guide	218	101	64	117
Applied Mathematics	82	41	3	41
History	66	36	14	30
Biological & Physical Sciences	68	47	27	21
Criminal Justice	104	85	21	19
Athletic Training/Trainer	27	11	5	15
Communication	23	10	10	14
Employment opportunities for post-master's certificate programming in Colorado				
Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse/Nursing	14	8	5	6
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	10	5	3	5

CIP Title	Co Job Openings	Co. Completions	UCCS Completions	Gap
Employment opportunities for doctoral degree programming in Colorado				
Busn. Administration & Management	827	106	7	721
Psychology	233	33	4	200
Computer Science	283	95	12	188
Applied Mathematics	80	20	3	60
Accounting	65	8	8	56
Special Education & Teaching	80	30	22	50
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	84	40	7	44
Criminal Justice	63	21	21	43
Social Work	65	24	19	41
Public Administration	85	47	41	38
Natural Sciences	42	4	4	37
Biological & Physical Sciences	63	27	27	36
Communication	43	10	10	34
Engineering, General	39	11	10	28
Computer & Information Sciences	31	11	1	21
Educational Leadership & Adm	105	85	37	20
Educational Evaluation & Research	30	11	10	19
History, General	35	18	14	16
Athletic Training/Trainer	18	5	5	13

Table 16: El Paso County, Co. Employment Gaps 2023

CIP Title	Co Job Openings	Co. Completions	UCCS Completions	Gap
Employment opportunities for baccalaureate degree programming in El Paso County, Co.				
Human Services	107	26	26	81
Visual & Performing Arts	124	48	48	76
Early Childhood Ed	88	15	15	73
Elementary Ed & Teaching	127	67	67	60
Computer Science	231	180	81	51
English Language & Lit	91	65	53	25
Spanish Language & Lit	30	7	5	24
Mathematics, General	54	42	25	12
Computer Engineering	21	13	10	8
Digital Comm & Media	9	3	3	6
Chemistry	20	16	9	5
Employment opportunities for master's degree programming in El Paso County, Co.				
Psychology	136	14	14	122
Social Work	133	19	19	114
Engineering	98	32	32	66
History	64	14	14	50
Biological & Physical Sci	72	27	27	44
Computer Science	181	146	12	35
Special Ed & Teaching	53	22	22	31

CIP Title	Co Job Openings	Co. Completions	UCCS Completions	Gap
Employment opportunities for master's degree programming in El Paso County, Co.				
Communication	40	10	10	31
Applied Mathematics	31	3	3	28
Ed Leadership & Adm	54	37	37	17
Athletic Training/Trainer	21	5	5	16
Accounting	26	13	8	13
Nursing/Reg Nurse	66	62	62	4
Electrical Engineering	11	8	7	3
Mechanical Engineering	9	7	7	2
Employment opportunities for post-master's certificate programming in El Paso County Co.				
Nursing/Reg Nurse	6	3	3	2
Psychiatric/Mental Health Nurse/Nursing	7	5	5	2
Employment opportunities for doctoral degree programming in El Paso County, Co.				
Psychology	36	4	4	32
Applied Mathematics	11	3	3	7
Engineering, General	16	10	10	6
Nursing/Reg Nurse	12	7	7	5
Communication	14	10	10	5