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**Welcome speech – Mountain Rural Philanthropy Days**  
**June 25, 2015 – CMC Rifle Campus**

Welcome to WESTERN COLORADO!!

Welcome to magnificent Garfield County!

Welcome to the mighty and impactful Rifle campus of Colorado Mountain College.

What a sincere honor it is to have you all here today.

It is also nice to see so many elected and government officials in the room, including Garfield County's Commissioners, as well as Rifle's native Son, Russ George, my colleague from Colorado Northwestern Community College.

First, a few quick thank yous and acknowledgments, so bear with me.

Thanks to Mary Ellen Denomy, West Garfield Trustee for Colorado Mountain College. Mary Ellen joined me at last night's reception and extends her regards today.

Thanks for organizational help goes to Sue Daley, who will retire from CMC next week after 42 years. What a capstone for Sue and her long and impactful history in Western Colorado. Thanks also to Jill Ziemann of our programs Go2Work, Gateway, Women in Transition and GarCo Sewing Works.

Allow me also to acknowledge and recognize Rifle Campus Dean, Rachel Pokrandt, and her staff and faculty here for so graciously hosting us today. You'll have a chance to meet Rachel, and others from our college who are presenting at some of the breakout sessions.

And of course, a sincere thanks to all of the important non-profit organizations in the room as well as representatives from statewide foundations for traveling such a distance to listen to our concerns and dreams for the communities we serve, and of course for their financial support over the years.

Finally, kudos and congratulations to the regional steering committee of rural government, nonprofit and business leaders, the Community Resource Center, and most especially to Sue Anschutz-Rodgers and the Anschutz Family Foundation, who inspired and whose leadership and staff have coordinated Rural Philanthropy Days for 24 years.

Many months ago, Mountain Rural Philanthropy Days embarked on a regional listening tour across five counties of Colorado's picturesque and special Western Slope. Many in this room participated in some aspect of that tour – a show of hands from those who took part in some way?

On that tour, local leaders shared thoughts regarding how their communities are different, and similar. They used such words as:

- Collaborative
- Compassionate
- Diverse
- Magnetic
- Active
- Full of opportunity

Among the common needs that bubbled to the top during these discussions were:

1. Increasing access to behavioral health care and substance abuse services, and
2. Meeting our communities' basic needs and developing strategies for inclusiveness

Allow me to piggy back on the latter of these two for the bulk of my remarks.

**Inclusiveness** is a fundamental commitment for Colorado Mountain College. In fact, our vision statement reads: *Colorado Mountain College aspires to be the most INCLUSIVE, Innovative, and student-centered college in the nation, elevating the economic, social, cultural, and environmental vitality of our beautiful Rocky Mountain communities.*

There are several reasons for this.

By the year 2020, three-fourths of all jobs in Colorado will require some form of post-secondary education, either a certificate, Associate's, or Bachelor's Degree.

With this in mind, we have a long way to go and a structural deficit is facing us. Although Colorado benefits from an "import effect," making it one of the most educated states in the country (that means many of us moved here with our college degrees from someplace else), only one in four native students who graduate from HS complete an AA or BA within 6 years.

For low-income or first-generation students the leaky educational pipeline is even more hazardous. In fact, Colorado ranks in the bottom 10 of all states in sending low-income, first-generation students to college and the state has one of the top three widest disparities in college attainment between white students and their peers of color.

So, how do we elevate inclusiveness and meet the needs of our employers, including those of you in this room, by 2020?

It is simple. We must raise our expectations and believe that ALL students in our K-12 pipeline MUST graduate from high school ready for college-level work without need for remediation and that our education systems are so tightly coupled, so well connected that no students fall through the cracks. Yes, this means ALL students prepare for and participate in postsecondary education!

So, who are our students? Who lives in our communities? Who will come to us for their education in future years?

Back to that point of inclusiveness...

During the 2000-2010 decade, CMC's Service area saw a **71.1% increase** in Hispanic and Latino population.

In the past 20 years, the size of the Hispanic/Latino population in Colorado's K-12 schools grew **166%**.

Currently (examples), in:

- Garfield County = 46%
- Eagle County = 50%
- Lake County = 70%

In 2013-14, **17.1%** of the CMC student body was Hispanic or Latino.

What an opportunity (and imperative) we have to do more.

In the past few years, we've also seen the acute impact of a depressed economy. So, our students are also adults who come back to us to re-train and re-set their goals in a new direction. Many are veterans looking to transition from military to civilian life. How many of you know someone who falls in these categories? How many of your non-profits have provided services to individuals or families impacted by the great recession? Thank you for the lift and support you have given them.

Nearly 50 years ago, Colorado Mountain College was created to serve the educational and training needs of the five Western Slope counties represented in this room: Eagle, Garfield, Lake, Pitkin and Summit. Today, we also serve Routt, Jackson, Grand, and Chaffee Counties – 9 counties total.

We've trained the nurses, the firefighters, the community police, the EMTs, entrepreneurs, and resort workers – from slope to kitchen. We now offer bachelor's degrees in five areas tied closely to the needs of our high mountain resort communities allowing us grow our own small business owners, teachers, nurses, and those with hands-on technical and applied skills.

In an immense landscape separated by some of the nation's tallest mountain passes, in a region with some of the state's greatest wealth juxtaposed to some of its most acute poverty, in a territory whose vast political diversity is rivaled only by its seemingly endless expanse, CMC is home.

In this region it is hard to find two communities with identical needs or services. All of them do things a little differently, and all of them have different resources. And, yes, all are special in their own way.

In this immense and beautiful land, CMC is perhaps the one common denominator available to all. As a result of this unique structure, we at the college take our public responsibilities seriously and with great pride. But, we also recognize that we must do more than simply be a college located in our communities. We must be these communities' college.

We must meet our towns and residents where they are and deliver services that, absent the college, wouldn't exist.

Since I arrived at the college a year and a half ago, I have made it my mission to ensure that every community in our amazing nine-county service area feels that CMC is engaged with them and is prepared to go beyond standard expectations for colleges.

Over the past year we have raised nearly \$700,000 to support college preparation activities in our high schools. Nearly all of these funds have been or will be handed over to the school districts in our communities to elevate student success.

Initially, some raised questions as to why we were working so hard to send resources to our high schools. Why wouldn't we keep the money for the college (?), they would ask. In my view, the college exists to serve the community. We are generously funded by our communities. Supporting our K-12 partners enables us to build the next generation of CMC students hand-in-hand, to ensure that college is accessible to all in our area, and to provide critical funds to districts crippled by devastating budget reductions and, in some cases, dramatically declining enrollments. One of the most pronounced examples of this is right here in western Garfield County.

The college aspires to be the very best college for its communities. Our success will be measured on our ability to impact and meaningfully support the students, businesses, and non-profits that call the beautiful central Rockies home.

As an example of this approach, this spring we sent a letter to every single graduating senior in our local high schools informing them they were “instantly admitted” to CMC. In that same letter we offered each student a President’s Scholarship – \$1,000 up front before any other financial aid would be applied. For many, this was the first scholarship or philanthropic gift they’d ever received.

The purpose of this initiative was not to increase revenues to the college. In fact, it cost the college money. The purpose was to reach into our schools and in some small but meaningful way tell each and every graduating senior that CMC knows who they are and the college is prepared to support them.

This program symbolizes our current mission and approach to serving our communities. Like the scholarship, CMC plans to do everything it can to return great value to its communities and the play a transformative role in supporting the schools and, eventually, the employers in our region.

In short, the scholarship is ultimately not about the money. Rather, it’s tangible evidence of the college’s deep and sincere commitment to its communities – a return on their investment in us.

The work of the college’s is greatly enhanced by the partnerships the college has with regional nonprofits and foundations. The college cannot do everything—and should not try to do so. Our partnerships with the nonprofit and philanthropic communities, however, allow the college to be present, to be meaningfully engaged in the critical work outside of education that must be done.

A few examples of these partnerships are as follows:

- CMC is the largest provider of English as a Second Language on the Western Slope, partnering with school districts and community groups wherever we can. The students in these programs need more than language skills, they often need housing assistance, child care, and nutrition support. Our partnerships with local nonprofits gives our ESL students access to these critical services.
- We partner with **Summit County** Schools and the Summit Foundation to help improve family literacy. Our faculty teach parents ESL or Spanish literacy, while their children engage in after-school enrichment or take part in day care in a nearby room.
- In **Garfield County** through the Valley Settlement Project and Manaus Fund, we support leadership and college training workshops to immigrant groups from Basalt to Glenwood Springs. Many of the workshops are conducted in Spanish.
  - Here at our Rifle campus this fall we are launching an innovative Career Academy, which will allow high school students to earn a college certificate by taking courses through CMC. Some of you may not know that the schools in Rifle and Parachute operate only four days a week due to budget constraints. The Career Academy initiative at this campus will fill in the fifth day and provide all students with access to college certificates free of charge to the student.
- In **Lake County**, 21% of adults hold college degrees compared to 37% statewide. To elevate college degree attainment, we partner with the Summit Foundation, the Lake County School District, and Build-A-Generation to increase high school graduation rates from 73% to 100% and increase Hispanic college matriculation 25% by 2020. The main purpose of this program is to help identify mentors and pathways for underserved populations without current role models and avenues for success. The program extends into 7th and 8th grade to establish expectations for success early and often.

- **In Pitkin, Eagle and Summit Counties**, we've partnered with school districts and local foundations such as the Aspen Community Foundation, the Summit Foundation, and the Vail Valley Foundation to name a few. Together, we landed a large regional grant from the state. This grant provides critical funding for additional high school personnel, college application fees and test fees for students, and additional free college courses in the high schools.

We are making this happen because it's the right thing to do. Partnerships are core to our mission.

As the college serving this vast, rugged, and impeccable part of our state, we understand we have a role to play and accept that fully. But, we also understand that we are only one pillar among many that make our communities stand tall. You all provide the additional services and support that make our communities the most wonderful places to call home.

Over the next two days, I hope you all will help us identify the ways that we can build additional connections to your work, to identify new undiscovered ways for the college to complement your missions and enhance your efforts.

We want to be even more engaged, more relevant, more closely tied to your success. It is my sincere hope that the college can sustain our current momentum into another 50 years of progress in Western Colorado.

Thank you for collaborating with us on past, current, and future initiatives. Together, we will make great things happen on Colorado's western slope.