

UNIVERSITY *of*  
NORTHERN COLORADO



Education Innovation Institute

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2011 Annual Report

Submitted by the University of Northern Colorado

January 10, 2011

\*\*Pursuant to CRS 23-40-106 the Institute is required to prepare and submit a report on or before January 10, 2011 and each year thereafter to the Education Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives concerning the activities of the Institute in the previous calendar year.

## **Purpose of the Institute**

The Education Innovation Institute was created in 2009 by the Colorado General Assembly to leverage new and existing applied research in order to solve practical problems in education reform. In spite of our nation's investment of billions of public and private dollars in education reform each year, there is arguably little evidence of systemic change or understanding of what really works. If we are to achieve meaningful and sustainable improvements in our education system, reform must be driven by strategic evidence-based decisions, which requires that policy makers have access to substantive data and analyses untainted by ideological perspectives. This need is the primary focus of the Education Innovation Institute.

## **What Makes the Institute Unique**

The Institute will leverage the knowledge of researchers, policymakers and practitioners throughout Colorado and the nation by focusing on three key functions: systems thinking, cross-functional collaboration and translating research into action.

### *Systems Thinking*

The Institute will bring a systems approach to education research, practice and policy, examining interrelationships among micro-, meso- and macro level education issues within the broader context of outside factors that affect the education system. This approach will enable the Institute to effect systemic change, and to serve as a connector and conduit for a broad spectrum of education research already under way throughout Colorado and the nation.

### *Cross-functional Collaboration*

P-20 education is an ecosystem with complex networks of knowledge transfer that must extend beyond teachers and students to include researchers, practitioners, developers of educational materials and others. By engaging the entire education ecosystem in its work, the Institute can address systemic issues in education and leverage the existing expertise and resources of education researchers, providers and practitioners, business and community leaders, policymakers and funders.

### *Research Translated into Action*

Much like technology transfer moves scientific advances from the laboratory into the commercial sector; the Institute will convert education research findings into effective policies and practices that can be sustained in the P-20 education system. The Institute's collaborative work is intended to identify innovations, assess their effectiveness, facilitate their refinement through model programs and further assessment, determine their best use, and act as a catalyst for taking successful innovations to scale through policy changes. This action-oriented research cycle differentiates the Institute from research centers that leave practitioners and policymakers to determine how to use research findings.

## **Development of the Institute**

UNC and legislative sponsors of the Institute's concept are determined that the Institute will not be like any other, that its design, leadership and plan of action will lead to meaningful, systemic change. To ensure that the efforts of the Institute are focused on the right issues, appropriate leadership is called to the tasks to be performed, and the activities of the Institute are driven by a meaningful theory of change, the University consulted a broad array of education leaders in developing a direction for the Institute. Most notably, the University commissioned a series of expert interviews designed to accomplish three things:

1. Determine the most desirable qualifications of a leader for the Institute.
2. Help establish key elements of the Institute's operation.
3. Secure feedback from experts as to the most pressing education reform issues in the nation, so as to inform the Institute's initial subject/content activities.

The University engaged Dr. Robert Dickeson, a recognized expert in higher education and public administration, to do the interviews, consult on the hiring of the Institute's leader, and facilitate the development of organizational, resource and programmatic strategies for the Institute. Dr. Dickeson brought expertise from having served as chair of the governor's cabinets in two states, university president, business CEO, and foundation executive. He has chaired blue-ribbon commissions appointed by three governors in two states; served as an officer of 40 corporate, government, foundation or public affairs organizations; and served as Commissioner from Colorado to the Education Commission of the States. He was a charter member of the President's Forum on Teaching as a Profession, a member of the National Commission on Minorities in Higher Education, and a National Consultant with the Office of Women in Higher Education. He is a past president of the Association of Public College and University Presidents, a seminar faculty member and mentor for the Fellows Program of the American Council on Education, co-founder of the Renaissance Group of Universities, and University of Northern Colorado President from 1981 until 1991.

### *Expert Interviews*

Interviews were designed within the context of a Logic Model, creating a feedback mechanism to secure information from education experts, policy makers and development specialists concerning key aspects of the Institute.

An Interview Protocol was developed, containing ten questions designed to elicit expansive, open-ended responses. Responses were requested about desirable leader qualifications; suggested candidates for the leadership position; specific recommendations for the Institute, focusing on those characteristics that would make it unique among such organizations; recommendations on education reform's most pressing issues, particularly those issues not receiving adequate attention; recommendations concerning systemic change and the role that the Institute might play in implementing change; funding sources and other feedback that might benefit the Institute and the University. A copy of the Interview Protocol is contained in Appendix A.

Working together with the University, Dr. Dickeson identified key leaders from Colorado and across the country whose reputation, background, expertise and experiences would render their advice to the University valuable. All respondents have had leadership experiences with one or more aspects of P-20 education, and represented a diversity of gender and ethnicity. Respondents received a letter or e-mail from UNC President Kay Norton inviting their participation in the interview process before they were contacted by Dr. Dickeson.

A total of twenty-two interviews were completed, ranging in length from 35 to 65 minutes. All respondents answered all ten questions in the protocol, but the depth and intensity of responses varied by respondent interest. Respondents were advised that none of their remarks would be personally attributed to them as individuals, the purpose being to elicit responses that were open and candid.

### *Logic Model*

Taking the findings from the interviews along with the purpose of the Education Innovation Institute as established in statute, the University developed a logic model to encompass three key strategies for the Institute: **Program, Organization and Resource Development.**

A logic model is a planning tool to enable an organization to anticipate the effectiveness of its programs, and then construct the means to accomplish those results. Typically such a model describes the logical linkages among several elements that, taken as a process, depict cause-and-effect relationships. While analytically distinct, the Institute's three key strategies, or tracks, interrelate so as to provide a cohesive whole for the Institute to operate going forward. The various tracks of the initial Logic Model developed for the Institute are in Appendix B.

### *Resources*

With no state funding currently available for an endeavor such as this, UNC has been pursuing other sources, including federal grant dollars and private funds. The University took the approach that it needed to secure enough resources to ensure the viable launch of the Institute before hiring an Executive Director. The University has identified over \$1 million for the Institute to date, and the Executive Director search began in September 2010.

### *Leadership*

The University set out to find an energetic and entrepreneurial leader to serve as the founding Executive Director of the Institute. In addition to being responsible for directing the development of the Institute's organizational, resource development, fiscal and programmatic strategies, the Executive Director's key responsibilities will include:

- Developing and promoting the Institute agenda for innovation in education;
- Building alliances with government, education and other external entities;
- Engaging in external resource development through fund-raising, grant writing and projects for hire; and
- Identifying, recruiting and coordinating the work of research fellows from within and external to the University.

The founding Executive Director must combine demonstrated leadership and a strong vision for education reform with a successful track record of commitment in carrying out projects on a large scale; have the ability to facilitate the transformation of research results into action through practice and policy; and be able to formulate and inform the development of research-based, data-driven public policy without a particular ideological point of view.

The search process was concluded in late December with the hiring of Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein, a senior researcher with the Texas Schools Project at the University of Texas at Dallas and an associate professor in both the Department of Economics and College of Education at Texas Christian University. A native Coloradoan who earned her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Colorado, Dr. Klopfenstein has over ten years of experience conducting and managing education policy research and evaluation at the Texas Schools Project, which houses Texas's administrative education data and provides researchers from across the country access to longitudinal individual-level data. She has numerous peer-reviewed publications in both economics and education, including extensive work examining factors that influence low-income, rural, black, and Hispanic students' preparation for college and successful workforce transitions.

Dr. Klopfenstein has already begun transitioning into her new role and will begin serving full-time as the founding Executive Director of the Institute this spring.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

- 1.** The Institute is pledged to secure “systemic change” in education. How do you feel that true systemic change takes place?
- 2.** As the Institute gains momentum, who are the key partners and agents it needs to associate with to increase its chances for effectiveness?
- 3.** Of the many critical issues confronting education today, what are the two or three most important ones to tackle?
- 4.** Most similar entities seem to get bogged down and don’t live up to their high expectations. What pitfalls should the UNC Institute avoid as it gets started?
- 5.** What recommendations would you make about the specific values, principles and/or standards the Institute should use in achieving its mission?
- 6.** The University will be searching nationally for a dynamic leader to head the Institute. What are the most desirable qualifications and characteristics you’d recommend for such a leader?
- 7.** Given these characteristics, do you have in mind any individuals you might recommend for the University’s consideration?
- 8.** The Institute will be funded only partially from state appropriations; do you have any suggestions about private sources of funding – individuals, corporations, foundations?
- 9.** Looking down the road, what will be the best ways to measure the success of the Institute?  
[Probe for specific outcomes and results]
- 10.** Are there any other recommendations you’d make or feedback you’d provide that would assist the University in developing the Institute?



## Education Innovation Institute Appendix B LOGIC MODEL

### Background

A logic model is a planning tool that enables an organization to anticipate the effectiveness of its programs, and then construct the means to accomplish those results. The logic model describes the linkages among several elements that, taken as a process, depict cause-and-effect relationships.

The University of Northern Colorado has developed a logic model to encompass three key strategies for the Education Innovation Institute: **Program**, **Organization** and **Resource Development**. While analytically distinct, the three strategies, or tracks, interrelate so as to provide a cohesive whole for the Institute to operate going forward.

The logic model is depicted in narrative and graphical forms.

### I. PROGRAM TRACK

The program track consists of the following elements: Institute Activities; Partners and Agents; Targets and Results; and Outcomes. In addition, the Program Track relies on Conduits.

#### Institute Activities

- Synthesizes relevant, pragmatic education research
- Translates research results into actionable practices and policies
- Conducts original research and special studies
- Informs
- Convenes
- Educates
- Evaluates

#### Partners and Agents

- Service providers and Influencers of education innovation
- Associations and consortia that seek research-based education reform
- Organizations that serve policymakers
- Organizations that serve students, families, and communities to become more successful

#### Targets and Results

- Education Providers:
  - Help students learn and succeed
  - Make innovative decisions that are research-based
  - Improve productivity
  - Prepare and evaluate teachers and teacher quality

- State and Federal Policymakers
  - Become better informed
  - Make enlightened decisions that are research-based
- Students, Families and Communities
  - Aspire to greater educational achievement
  - Take responsibility for educational preparation and involvement

## Outcomes

- **Student attainment** improves as students succeed at all levels of education
- **Teacher preparation, quality and capacity** are improved
- **Curricular and structural improvements** are made in practice, academic policy and public policy
- Ultimate outcome: More people succeed in education at all levels, thus strengthening our democracy, our economy and our quality of life.

## Conduits

- Media inform
- Public demands improved education outcomes

## II. ORGANIZATION TRACK

The Organization Track consists of two elements: Principles and Practices, and Results. The organization exists to support the program.

### Principles and Practices

- Reform Oriented
  - Education needs serious reform
  - Return on investment in education can be improved
  - Primary emphasis on the needs of the nation
- Research-Based
  - Internal decisions and external products and services are data-driven and outcomes-focused
  - Relevant research can be leveraged to solve meaningful issues in education
  - Efforts will be focused on high-yield strategies
  - Solutions can be scalable
- Focused on the Needs of Target Audiences
  - Education providers
  - State and federal policymakers
  - Students, families and communities
  - Communications that are understandable and lead to action
- Mission and Outcomes-Driven
  - Highly qualified and empowered staff
  - Strategic priorities
  - Sufficient space, equipment, technology and support systems
  - Non-partisan, ethical and credible resource
  - Maintains operations with efficiency and productivity



## Results

- Institute staff and associates contribute full array of skills and knowledge
- Staff build trusting and effective relationships
- Institute demonstrates effective leadership and high quality work
- Evaluation demonstrates Institute solutions result in innovation and reform
- Programs function proficiently
- High quality publications, decision aids, convening and teaching events and discovery activities are produced
- Institute merits approbation as a highly credible resource for practitioners, policymakers and media

## III. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TRACK

The Resource Development track consists of four elements: Principles, Practices, Targets and Results, and Outcomes. As with the organization, resource development is necessary to support the program.

### Principles

- **The Institute:**
  - Contributes to education innovation and reform
  - Learns from evaluation and feedback
  - Builds and maintains effective relationships
- **Education and Policy Audiences:**
  - Support Institute leadership and expertise
  - Believe that research-based solutions contribute to achieving community and national goals
- **Institute's Stewardship of Resources:**
  - Is accountable to external scrutiny
  - Complies with ethical standards
  - Relies on support from multiple sources
  - Requires partnerships for large-scale initiatives

### Practices

- Fiscal resources are stretched to increase impact
- Institute reaches out to stakeholders to increase learning and improve outcomes
- Like-minded organizations and activities that achieve results are supported
- High standards of ethics and effective stewardship are modeled
- Talent and expertise to achieve program goals are contributed
- Institute supports leadership, scholarship, knowledge management and effective practices in the field
- Institute concentrates on high-yield strategies that work

### Targets and Results

- **Institute:**
  - Has the stature to convene stakeholders
  - Is consulted for its expertise and leadership
  - Is cited for exemplary work
- **Individual Donors** provide support through gifts and planned giving to sustain Institute operations
- **Corporations** provide gifts and grants to support Institute mission and activities
- **Foundations** provide grant support to enable Institute results and partner with Institute for large-scale initiatives

- **Government Funders** allocate funds to Institute for general and project-specific purposes
- **Education Providers** contract with Institute to conduct research, train practitioners, share expertise and evaluate outcomes
- **Government Entities** contract with Institute to draft model policies and legislation, conduct research, share expertise and inform policymakers
- **General Public** supports Institute through subscriptions, fees for service and taxpayer support.

### Outcomes

- The Institute makes positive contributions to educational innovation
- The Institute's mission is advanced and its work is sustainable
- The Institute's solutions are replicable on a larger scale
- Education at all levels becomes more effective



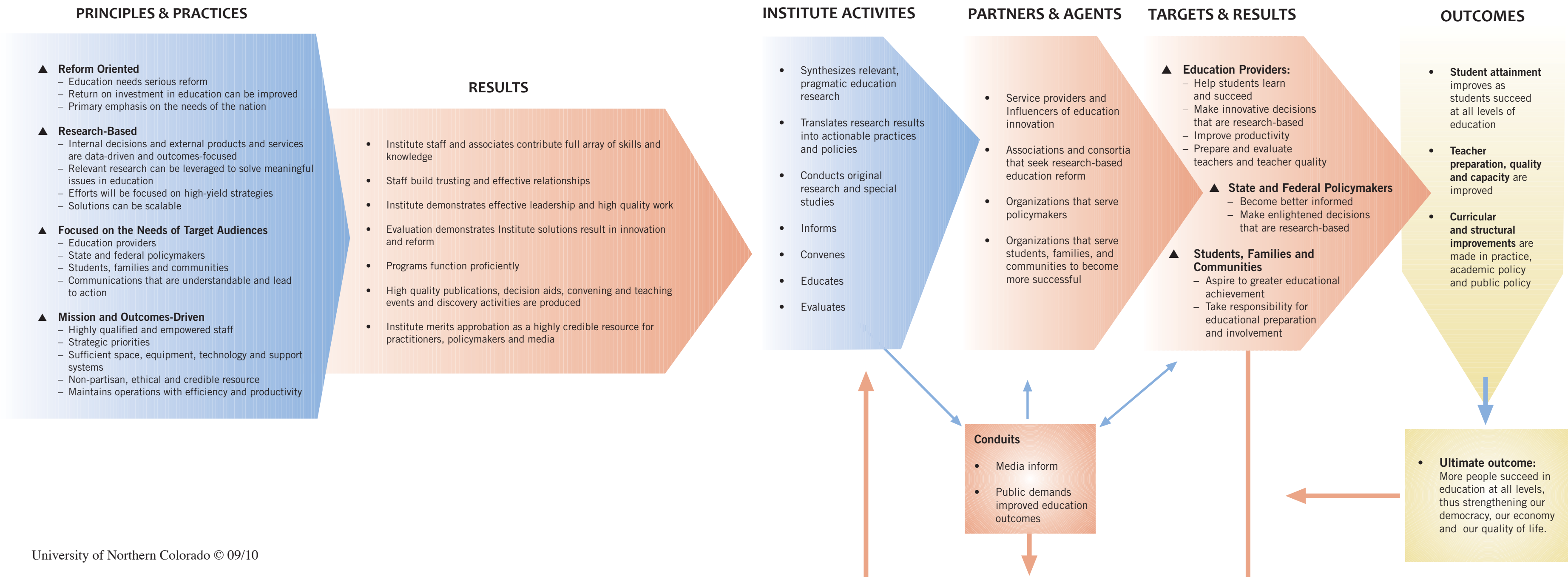
## Education Innovation Institute Logic Model

### Resource Development Track



### Organization Track

### Program Track



# University of Northern Colorado

## Education Innovation Institute Resource Development Track

### PRINCIPLES

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## PROGRAM TRACK



# University of Northern Colorado Education Innovation Institute Organization Track

## PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES

- ▲ **Reform Oriented**
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  - Return on investment in education can be improved
  - Primary emphasis on the needs of the nation
- ▲ **Research-Based**
  - Internal decisions and external products and services are data-driven and outcomes-focused
  - Relevant research can be leveraged to solve meaningful issues in education
  - Efforts will be focused on high-yield strategies
  - Solutions can be scalable
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- ▲ **Mission and Outcomes-Driven**
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**PROGRAM TRACK**



# University of Northern Colorado Education Innovation Institute Program Track

## INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES

- Synthesizes relevant, pragmatic education research
- Translates research results into actionable practices and policies
- Conducts original research and special studies
- Informs
- Convenes
- Educates
- Evaluates

## PARTNERS & AGENTS

- Service providers and Influencers of education innovation
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- Organizations that serve students, families, and communities to become more successful

## TARGETS & RESULTS

- ▲ **Education Providers:**
  - Help students learn and succeed
  - Make innovative decisions that are research-based
  - Improve productivity
  - Prepare and evaluate teachers and teacher quality
- ▲ **State and Federal Policymakers**
  - Become better informed
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- ▲ **Students, Families and Communities**
  - Aspire to greater educational achievement
  - Take responsibility for educational preparation and involvement

## OUTCOMES

- **Student attainment** improves as students succeed at all levels of education
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### Conduits

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- **Ultimate outcome:** More people succeed in education at all levels, thus strengthening our democracy, our economy and our quality of life.

