



OTERO
COLLEGE

HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027



Letter from the President

Dear Community of Learners,

Transformation 2027. Otero College is preparing to be the best rural community college in Colorado and beyond. The pandemic has exposed weaknesses in our educational systems. We have adult learners who need to upskill to find gainful employment, and traditional-aged students who need a certain set of skills to successfully transfer to other institutions of higher education. The world of work is changing rapidly. Otero College students should have the essential skills (most consider them “soft skills”) and the “adaptability quotient” to help them navigate an uncertain world. As a Hispanic Serving Institution, we have the responsibility to ensure that our diverse students possess the knowledge, skills, and experiences to be competitive for future opportunities. Further, our first-generation and low-income students are more vulnerable than ever.

Our southeast rural communities need Otero College to be successful. The time is now for us to re-envision what a small rural community college is capable of doing and how we can be an engine of social mobility; what I am calling Transformation 2027. My hopes and dreams are that we are a better institution five years from now.

I am a firm believer that we have the responsibility to create more opportunities for “collisions” – by that I mean, opportunities for unique communities of interest to interact and dialogue. You never know when one of these “collisions” will create ideas and synergy to envision a future where everyone can be the best versions of themselves.

In order to accomplish this impassioned endeavor, we solicited feedback and ideas from all segments of our community – students, faculty, staff, local leaders, and alumni, as well as advisory council and foundation board members. We received thoughtful feedback and creative ideas for consideration. I believe you will find an innovative and ambitious set of goals and objectives. It was truly an inspiring exercise and excites me more. There is so much genuine interest in Otero College.

One of my favorite quotes is by Paulo Coelho, in his book *The Alchemist*, “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.” My desire is that we can conspire with every student to help them thrive and reach their true potential.

Timothy A. Alvarez, Ph.D.
President



OTERO



Vision

To be the best rural community college in Colorado.

Mission

To educate students and provide workforce training that enhances personal and professional growth in a learning environment that facilitates maintaining high academic standards, relationship building, academic and emotional support, and encourages all students to become the best version of themselves.

Values

At Otero College, our work is guided and informed by our commitment to diversity, integrity, learning and innovation, safety, and community.

About Otero College

50.3% Students of Color

Otero College's student population bleeds diversity. Students from all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds lend to the vibrant campus culture.

66% First Generation

Many of Otero's students are the first in their families to go to college, or neither of their parents have obtained a 4-year bachelor's degree. Otero faculty and staff are committed to helping all students navigate the complex landscape of higher education.

31 Academic Programs

Students have the choice of over 30 academic and technical programs to choose from, all taught by faculty who are experts in their field.

18:1 Student to Faculty Ratio

Student focused learning environment where students are more than "just a number."



CHALLENGES

COVID-19 Recovery

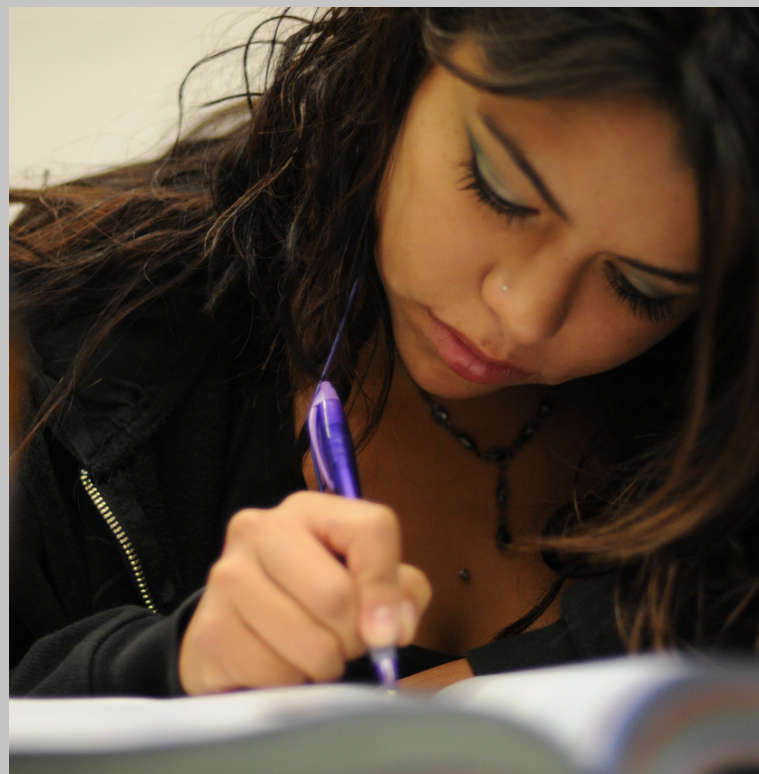
- Decreased academic growth in K-12 students
- Increased mental health concerns in students and staff
- Remote work and “The Great Resignation” have impacted hiring practices, employee retention, and employee satisfaction
- Inflation is outpacing salary increases
- Technological advances and automation are moving at a faster pace

Enrollment

- Population changes are affecting high school enrollment and college enrollment
- Our service area is over-saturated with residents who have an associate's degree, but the number of residents with a bachelor's degree is below the national average
- State funding for higher education in Colorado remains low
- Skills-based hiring, increased tuition and fees, and news about National student loan debt have people questioning the value of a college degree

Community and Campus Infrastructure

- Limited housing supply
- Limited childcare options
- Poor health care quality and consistency in our service area
- Lack of regional transportation between communities
- Aging buildings on campus
- Athletic fields and gym spaces need to be updated



OPPORTUNITIES

"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal." - Henry Ford

Federal, State, and System Grants

- Title V Accessing Innovative Measures
- TRIO Student Support Services
- Open Education Resources
- RISE
- Finish What You Started
- Teaching Excellence
- REACH

Community Outreach and Engagement

- Strengthen relationships with industry partners for new-skilling, upskilling, and reskilling through Skills Advance and/or Rural Jumpstart grants
- Develop programs related to housing, childcare, and health care that support community needs
- Utilize technology to support our concurrent partners

Rural College Consortium

- Course-sharing opportunities with other rural colleges
- Resource sharing opportunities with other rural colleges
- Joint funding requests for technology and infrastructure



OUR GOALS

"Otero, through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, will not only ensure that it is meeting the academic needs of its students and community but will also set out a vision for addressing challenges and opportunities in the future." Tracy Pepper, former Otero College Advisory Council member

Otero College has committed to working towards three goals to improve student access and success, as well as transform the workplace to ensure Otero is one of the premier places to work in the Arkansas Valley. These goals are fluid, and progress will be evaluated throughout the duration of this plan. We will assess, revise, and restructure as needed.

ENHANCE THE
STUDENT
EXPERIENCE

TRANSFORM
OUR WORKPLACE

ENGAGE
OUR COMMUNITY



GOAL 1: ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Developing the student, both academically and personally, is at the heart of Otero's mission. Each student that enrolls at Otero has access to state-of-the-art technology and facilities, all designed with the student experience at the forefront.

Objective 1: Transform the Academic Experience



Key Strategies

- Strengthen support for adult learners by offering more night and weekend courses, giving students credit for prior learning, and extending office hours
- Ensure there is an adequate number of study rooms and tutors and peer tutors on staff to meet student needs
- Incorporate career-readiness activities in class and connect students with experiential learning activities, research opportunities, and internships
- Enhance instruction through the implementation of Universal Design for Learning and hybrid courses
- Explore new programs and articulation agreements that benefit traditional, non-traditional, and concurrently enrolled students

Key Performance Indicators

- Exceed the national fall-to-fall retention rate for full time students by 2027
- By 2027, increase the number of credentials awarded by 10%
- Establish benchmarks for student course evaluation completion by Fall 2022 and increase response rate by 2027
- Develop five new academic programs by 2027

"I am a single mom of three, who works fulltime in addition to getting my nursing degree. I commute from out of the area and am so thankful that Otero has a program that will work with my personal life and work schedule. The Otero Nursing program is very structured, there are no surprises, and the instructors are experienced professionals in their field."
- Sheree, Otero nursing student

Goal 1: Enhance the Student Experience cont.

Objective 2: Improve Student Affairs Processes and Co-Curricular Experiences



Key Strategies

- Improve student onboarding through a mandatory new student orientation
- Implement best practices in customer service through professional development opportunities
- Create a vibrant student engagement program with activities that all students can attend, and ensure students know about Associated Student Government other student clubs and organizations
- Ensure students are career-ready by connecting them with work-study jobs and career counseling
- Seek opportunities to intentionally act as a Hispanic Serving Institution to ensure students needs are being met

Key Performance Indicators

- By 2027, increase student engagement with academic advising and planning by 5%
- Exceed the national fall-to-fall retention rate for full time students by 2027
- By 2027, increase the number of credentials awarded by 10%

"I grew up in the area and had always planned on going away to college. After my high school graduation, I realized that with all the Otero credits I had earned while in high school through the concurrent credit program, I was only a couple of semesters away from graduating from Otero with an associate's degree. My decision to stay at Otero and finish the degree saved my family thousands of dollars in tuition and living expenses."
- Adam, current Otero student

Goal 1: Enhance the Student Experience cont.

Objective 3: Maintain and Update Facilities to Align with Student Needs

Key Strategies

- Redesign the auxiliary gym
- Obtain funding to remodel the locker rooms and training room
- Explore the possibility of installing a turf field
- Update the residence halls by adding new paint, a trash chute in Wunsch Hall, new washers/dryers, and a community kitchen
- Create intentional outdoor spaces where students can gather

Key Performance Indicators

- Implement a student ticketing system for facility issues by Fall 2022
- Devise a plan and secure funding to update the auxiliary gym and create intentional outdoor spaces for students by Fall 2024



"I wouldn't trade this experience for anything else in the world. I have learned so much about myself and my leadership style as well as how others lead." - Kendra, Otero alumni on participating in the President's Leadership Program

GOAL 2: TRANSFORM OUR WORKPLACE

Otero College is committed to developing a workforce that reflects our diverse student population. Through strategic marketing and intentional onboarding, Otero aims to increase the number of qualified applications for each open position. Otero will increase employee satisfaction and retention by supporting professional development and advancement, and enhanced campus communication.



Objective 1: Revamp the Hiring and Onboarding Process

Key Strategies

- Market open positions in a way that highlights the benefits of rural living (e.g., outdoor recreation, cost-of-living, shorter commute times, the tight-knit community, and a low student-to-faculty ratio)
- Explore transitional housing and childcare options
- Conduct salary and job description reviews and ensure employees are paid fairly and equitably based on education, skills, and work experience
- Review the Alternate Work Schedule and align with other colleges
- Improve employee onboarding through mentoring and training

Key Performance Indicators

- Create a new employee onboarding and mentoring program by Spring 2023
- By 2027, increase the overall number of applicants by 5%

Goal 2: Transform our Workplace cont.

Objective 2: Increase Employee Retention and Satisfaction

Key Strategies

- Reward employee performance and innovation through recognition programs and compensation
- Support lifelong learning through professional development opportunities and educational incentives/tuition reimbursement, and develop employee growth plans to identify opportunities for advancement
- Improve employee morale through improved communication, team building, networking, and employee events
- Establish a formal definition and process of shared governance on campus

Key Performance Indicators

- By 2027, increase employee trust and confidence in Otero leadership by 10%
- By 2027, improve communication of institutional goals and strategies by 10%
- Ensure employee processes are fair and equitable by 2025



GOAL 3: ENGAGE OUR COMMUNITY

As a community college, Otero was founded to serve the community. Relationships with industry partners, surrounding K-12 school districts, and supporting local businesses is key to the success of the college. Otero continues to build lasting partnerships with the community, and restore Rattler Pride throughout the Arkansas Valley.

Objective 1: Bring the Community to Otero

Key Strategies

- Invite community members to campus for tours and events
- Explore non-credit and community education course offerings
- Engage alumni through an alumni ambassador program, monthly alumni highlights, and alumni events
- Partner with local news organizations to promote community events on campus

Key Performance Indicators

- Develop five reoccurring community events on campus by 2027
- Secure reoccurring enrollment in 15 new non-credit or community education courses on campus or online by 2027
- Create an alumni ambassador program by Fall 2023



Goal 3: Engage the Community cont.

Objective 2: Take Otero to the Community



Key Strategies

- Develop a speaker's bureau and have faculty and staff available to present to the community as Subject Matter Experts
- Increase student involvement in the community (i.e., have ASG attend City Council meetings and get mentored by members, involve athletes in community service projects or pick-up games at City Park, hand out free tickets to campus events, visit area schools)
- Explore industry partnerships and identify ways Otero can meet the needs of local organizations

Key Performance Indicators

- Participate in two community service or outreach projects a year
- Partner with at least three organizations by 2027 to provide reskilling, upskilling, or professional development for their employees

FUTURE PROJECTS

Throughout the planning process, many concepts, and strategies to meet the goals of this plan were presented by Otero employees. Otero leadership made note of all suggestions and will provide support for faculty and staff to take an active role in researching and possibly implementing the below “parking lot” of great ideas.

New Courses and Programs

- Introduction to Officiating
- Meat Fabrication
- Spanish/Language Interpretation
- Graphic Design
- Sustainable and Renewable Energy
- Fire Science
- Landscape Design
- Teacher Continuing Education Courses
- Veterinary Technician
- AAA, College 101
- Construction
- Barbering
- BAS, Business
- BAS, Behavioral Health
- Geographic Information Systems/Drone Technology
- Archeology/Paleontology Repository
- Water Quality Management

Student Recruitment and Retention

- Establish annual traditions
- Create a mascot and fight song
- Intramural sports
- Expand Rattler Den hours of operations to later in the evening and create flexible seating
- Have international students partner with SODEXO to prepare dishes from home country
- Expand meal offerings in the cafeteria to align with student dietary restrictions and offer more healthy options
- Host creative arts student engagement events (ex, open mic nights, art in the park)

Employee Recruitment, Satisfaction, and Retention

- Annual department retreats
- Compensation Time Policy for essential employees
- Dress Code Policy/Uniforms for campus security/safety Team
- Employee referral, signing, and bilingual skill bonuses

Physical Space

- Update high traffic areas on campus with new Otero branding (Student Services, Learning Commons, hallways of classroom buildings, Rizzuto Banquet Hall)
- Expand the greenhouse
- Ensure all buildings are ADA compliant
- Secure funding and install a sports complex with indoor soccer field, track, and climbing wall
- Purchase another building for expansion of CTE programs (Loma Vista, Inspiration Field, Boy’s Ranch)
- Replace chairs in various classrooms across campus
- Repair drainage system
- Clean out and redesign the use of campus storage units
- Hold annual surplus auction
- Repair roofs and HVAC systems for various campus buildings
- Fix the bridge between McBride and Life Sciences

Community Engagement

- Offer community services on campus and have Otero satellite offices downtown
- Host more community events on campus where students and community members mingle
- Partner with local businesses and restaurants for fundraisers
- Create mobile learning labs that can be used for outreach and concurrent enrollment

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Led by the Otero College Steering Committee, this plan was developed with fidelity and transparency in the spring of 2022. An external analysis was conducted by the committee, a virtual kick-off meeting was held with the campus community, a Strategic Planning presentation was shared with employees, and 12 roundtable discussions with campus and community stakeholders were facilitated by the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, with support from the Executive Assistant to the President. Also, surveys were administered to retrieve additional feedback from students, faculty, staff, Advisory Council Representatives, Foundation Board Members, and the community.

The campus and community stakeholders involved in the development of this plan include staff from Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Athletics, Business Office, Information Technology, and Physical Plant, as well as faculty members, student leaders, Otero College Advisory Council and Foundation Board, and community leaders.

The goals, objectives, and strategic initiatives outlined in this plan align with the Higher Learning Commission's Criteria, the Colorado Commission of Higher Education's Master Plan, and the Colorado Community College System Strategic Plan.

