



UNC President Kay Norton's Remarks to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education
April 9, 2010

The University of Northern Colorado was founded 120 years ago as the state normal school, a new type of institution recognizing that teaching had become a profession and required specialized preparation. The normal school movement was a part of the overall progressive movement of the late 19th century in the United States, and related to the Hull House settlement house project led by Jane Addams in Philadelphia. Education was viewed as the responsibility of the entire community, not just the schools or the teachers. UNC's legacy, therefore, is one of twin commitments to the quality of education through professional preparation and to the needs of the broader community.

The evolution of former normal schools into 21st century public higher education universities has reflected a common pattern throughout the United States. These institutions typically have added other public service professions, such as nursing, to their curriculum over the years, along with other core arts and sciences undergraduate and graduate programs. UNC has followed this pattern. There is no inconsistency at all between our responsibility to be a thought leader in education, in the broadest sense, and providing academically sound graduate programs that are a natural extension of our comprehensive undergraduate programs, and which serve the needs of our students and the state.

In 1985, Colorado adopted a comprehensive re-structure of public higher education, adopting a statutory role and mission for each governing board. UNC's role and mission was defined as the primary preparer of teachers in the state. In 2003, in recognition of the evolution of UNC's mission, the statute was amended to refer to "educational personnel," "professional educators" and "education administrators" rather than simply "teachers." We supported this change, and viewed the word "primarily" as accurately reflecting our programs.

UNC and its governing Board of Trustees embrace our historic mission as it has evolved over the years. We genuinely view it as a mission, as a calling. Every program which we develop is reviewed for its relation to the mission. We believe this is why our array of degree programs, undergraduate and graduate, has been approved with regularity by CCHE, regardless of the process in place at the time.

The question of whether a particular program, such as the Masters in Accounting (MAcc) degree now before you, qualifies as consistent with our graduate mission of programs "primarily in the field of education" requires that we look at the entire array of UNC masters and doctoral programs. (See attached.) You will see that our array of programs

has a coherence with professional education and public service of which we are quite proud.

In the narrow sense, about half of the graduate programs currently offered by UNC are in the traditionally defined field of K-12 education and licensure. However, such a narrow definition of “education” is outdated. Professional educators at all levels, including K-12, are being asked to do masters and doctoral work in content areas, not just traditional pedagogy. Professionals in public health, nursing, business, criminal justice and public administration, to name a few, often have an educational component to their work.

More importantly, with perhaps only one exception, every masters degree offered by UNC qualifies the holder to teach at the community college level. This will be true of the Masters in Accounting as well. Every one of our doctoral programs qualifies the individual for faculty status at colleges and universities. Certainly the preparation of faculty and leadership at the post-secondary education level is a crucial function for UNC.

I hope this is helpful. I am prepared to discuss this with you at your convenience tomorrow, April 8. Academic representatives of UNC will be present at the Commission meeting on Friday, if the Commission should wish to take action on this matter.