

**University of Northern Colorado  
College of Osteopathic Medicine**

**Strategic Plan, 2025-2030**



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## LETTER FROM THE FOUNDING DEAN

The Task Force engaged in this Strategic Planning process (see Appendix 1 and 2) with full understanding that our first and foremost job through 2030 is to lay the foundations for, and successfully open, the University of Northern Colorado College of Osteopathic Medicine (UNC COM). Our singular focus is to graduate world-class physicians who are fully prepared to practice outstanding osteopathic medicine.

This is no small task. These years are formative for the UNC COM, when we will create every aspect of our program from the ground up, pushing for excellence at all levels. At no other time in our foreseeable future will we be tasked with the intensity of concurrently building and launching a curriculum, physical facilities, technological structure, a complete set of faculty and staff, and of course, student cohorts.

This Strategic Planning document will serve as a daily reference guide to help our faculty, staff and leadership make outcome-focused choices. While we reference key performance indicators (KPIs) throughout the plan, these measures can, and will, evolve over time and as such are housed in our documented work plan, which supports our strategy. Using a work plan as a living document allows us to use metrics to inform our progress toward meeting the goals set forth in our strategic plan while allowing them to evolve and change as the COM develops. The current work plan has been linked to our strategic plan document.

Our community (see Strategic Priority 5 and Appendix 3) has been, and will be, vital to us as champions, collaborators, and strategic partners. Quite simply, their unceasing support has been, and will continue to be, instrumental in the COM's success.

While I could make an extensive list of community advocates, first and foremost among them, and the one most appropriate to thank here, is the University of Northern Colorado. Having the vision to build this COM despite the challenges of undertaking a project of this size is an audacious goal and developing a COM at a public university is a rare opportunity, creating both a wonderful synergy and a unique set of challenges.

We are eager to serve our first classes of osteopathic medical students and work with our university and community partners to positively impact our communities and the healthcare workforce in Colorado.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Longenecker, DO, MS, FACOEP, FACEP, Founding Dean

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

### **1. Achieve or surpass all Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) standards to secure full accreditation.**

- A. Use COCA requirements and standards as a continuous guide to meet each milestone.

#### Strategies:

- 1. Develop Standard Review working groups tasked with ongoing review of COCA standards and use their findings to guide planning and programmatic change.
- 2. Conduct regular training and progress assessments with the working groups to reinforce understanding and adherence to COCA standards

- B. Progress to full accreditation from the COCA by providing ongoing reporting reflective of adequate progress and compliance, without receiving requirements

#### Strategies:

- 1. Ongoing assessment of standards by working groups which is used to inform change in COM processes.
- 2. Orientation of faculty/staff and students regarding the COCA site visit process.

## **2. Create a learning environment that fosters student academic and clinical excellence.**

- A. Develop a curriculum that employs effective pedagogy for adult learners and cultivates critical thinking skills essential for future physicians.

### Strategies:

1. Curricular mapping to programmatic learning outcomes
2. Regular evaluation and enhancement of curriculum
3. Faculty development to enhance knowledge and skills surrounding problem based, case-based and team-based learning.

- B. Provide a learning environment that accommodates individual student needs while upholding the level of academic excellence expected of a COM.

### Strategies:

1. Formation of a student success team who monitors student progress and provides early intervention for students facing academic challenges.
2. COM based learning service specialists to mentor students to achieve academic excellence.
3. Develop peer tutoring programs.

**3. Value, encourage, and inspire faculty, staff, and leadership to recognize achievement, provide mentorship to others, and encourage professional growth.**

- A. Set expectations, and provide resources, for faculty and staff to continue to learn, grow and pursue professional development opportunities.

Strategies:

1. Professional development plans for faculty and staff.
2. Track and celebrate professional growth and achievement.

- B. Establish a culture of transparent and clear communication as a distinctive quality of our college.

Strategies:

1. Conduct town halls and open forums on a regular basis
2. Regular COM newsletter highlighting accomplishments, ongoing projects and upcoming events.
3. Departmental meetings to discuss common projects, challenges, and areas of concern.

- C. Mentorship of students is a clear expectation for all faculty, staff, and leadership.

Strategies:

1. Clearly express this expectation as part of the onboarding and ongoing training process for all faculty, staff and administration
2. Create avenues for students to give feedback on and recognize those who have provided them with mentorship.

#### **4. Create a program that is supportive, welcoming, and healthy for all individuals**

A. Model our commitment to fostering belonging within the COM.

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement processes that ensure students, faculty, staff, and leadership feel supported, valued, and heard.
2. Provide support services that meet the unique and multifaceted needs of the COM community.

B. Design and implement communication and outreach efforts to attract a broad and qualified applicant pool and build clinical partnerships that will allow our students to work with a variety of patient populations.

Strategies:

1. Development of pipeline programs.
2. Development of early acceptance programs targeting a qualified and mission focused student population.
3. Target advertising and outreach to assure a broad pool of candidates when hiring faculty, staff and administrators.
4. Recruitment of preceptors across a variety of healthcare settings and communities.

Note: We will operate according to the diversity, equity and inclusion standards, policies and procedures established and maintained by the University of Northern Colorado, at [www.unco.edu/equity-inclusion](http://www.unco.edu/equity-inclusion).

## **5. Intentionally integrate our college into the surrounding community, including the University, the region and healthcare services.**

- A. Develop strategies to foster community trust and partnership involving leadership, faculty, staff and students.

### Strategies:

1. Align COM processes and policies with those of the university whenever possible.
2. Establish pathways to the COM for students from UNC and the region.
3. Interdisciplinary initiatives in research and curriculum development/delivery.
4. Involvement of members from the university, regional healthcare and the Greeley community on the college advisory board.
5. Faculty and staff involvement in community organizations.
6. Opportunities for student engagement in community partnerships and community service.
7. Partner with regional healthcare systems to develop and support graduate medical education.

- B. Prepare COM students to proactively respond to the needs of the communities they will serve.

### Strategies:

1. Involve students in community outreach events and community service.
2. Develop a curriculum which includes the foundations of population health.



- C. Foster and sustain confidence in our students' education and abilities across these communities.

Strategies:

1. Develop a communication and marketing plan.
2. Ongoing communication with preceptors to gauge student performance and to highlight student achievements.
3. Build community confidence in programming and students through ongoing opportunities for communication and engagement.

Note: opening of the COM meets a key performance indicator of the current UNC strategic plan.

## APPENDIX 1 - PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

The UNC COM Advisory Board, along with faculty and staff of the COM, served as the Task Force for this Strategic Planning process. They are:

Brenda Campos- Spitze, MD, Sunrise Community Health Clinics and member of the UNC Board of Trustees

Sanjeev Choudhary, PhD, Associate Dean, Preclinical Education, UNC COM\*

Liz Gilbert, EdD, Colorado School of Public Health

Madison Gremillion, Student, Colorado School of Public Health\*

Kamel Haddad PhD, Dean, College of Natural and Health Sciences, UNC

John Hall, Director, Economic Development and Urban Revitalization, City of Greeley

Melissa Henry, PhD, Director, School of Nursing, UNC

Norma Juárez, MPH, Manager of Operations and Accreditation Logistics, UNC COM\*

Beth Longenecker, DO, Founding Dean, UNC COM\*

Mitt McLaughlin, PhD, Chair, Biological Sciences, UNC

Arlo Richardson, President, Richmark Companies

Dave Ross, DO, Associate Dean, Clinical Education/GME, UNC COM\*

Teresa Sharp, PhD Colorado School of Public Health

Rodolfo Vargas, MPH, Director, Cesar Chavez Cultural Center, and Undocumented Student Services\*

Mark Wallace, MD, Chief Clinical Officer Sunrise community Health

\*Denotes member of small planning group.

**Planning Facilitator:** J. Kay Coughlin, CEO, Facilitator On Fire

## **APPENDIX 2 - DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING PROCESS**

The full Task Force (see list in Appendix 1) met in-person, guided by the planning facilitator, during August of 2024. Task Force members were encouraged to voice their experience with and interpretation of concerns, needs and gaps for students, the local community, and healthcare services.

Subsequently, during September and October of 2024, a small group of Task Force members (denoted with an “\*” in the Participant list, Appendix 1) met with the facilitator twice, virtually. This group consisted of faculty and staff of the COM, a director from the University’s diversity, equity and inclusion division, and a current UNC graduate student who lives in the Greeley community. The small group provided guidance on appropriately focusing the thoughts and ideas discussed by their fellow Task Force at the August meeting, and this group wrote the KPIs (see the standalone KPIs document for more information).

All document drafts were prepared and managed by the planning facilitator, with extensive input from the founding dean and small group. The full Task Force was asked to comment on the final draft of the plan in mid-November of 2024.

Work plans will be created on an ongoing basis. The KPIs document will be adjusted as needed and will be a critical component of work plans.

### **APPENDIX 3 - NOTES ON OUR COMMUNITY**

We are committed to utilizing the important resources offered by communities. At the same time, we will offer our own unique strengths to enhance existing frameworks, structures, networks and services as much as possible. The community is so important to us that we wrote Strategic Priority 5 to ensure we place enough emphasis on our commitment to blending with these cultures.

It is vital to the COM to integrate effectively with the University. We will build new systems, if necessary, but our first and preferred method of operation will be to adhere to existing processes, structures, and culture wherever possible and appropriate.

The Greeley region and greater northern Colorado are not just our home but will become the places where our graduates practice medicine, volunteer, live and raise families. We care deeply about the people of this region and the state of healthcare services here, and our curriculum and support services will reflect our commitment to the region.

The network of healthcare providers in our region is an extraordinary group, serving a growing population during challenging times. We wish to connect meaningfully with these providers and the individual practitioners who are the backbone of the system.

During the planning process, the Task Force discussed that the COM is in a unique position to work with students from two historically underserved demographic groups: Latine and rural populations. Both groups are vital contributors to the cultural richness, economic growth, and everyday life of northeast Colorado, and both face significant challenges with access to higher education and financial resources. As the UNC COM continues to build out our programs and services, we will intentionally design systems and resources to be inclusive of, and welcoming to, students from these groups.

## **APPENDIX 4 - RELATED DOCUMENTS**

While this Strategic Plan provides guidance at the highest level, significant detail on our plans and operations is available in our additional structural documents. Please see the COM website or inquire at administrative offices for current information on the following planning materials.

- Mission, Vision and Values statement
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this Strategic Plan
- Research Strategic Plan
- Financial plans
- Marketing and Admissions plans
- UNC Strategic Plan
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion standards, processes and documentation  
(available through UNC's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)