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CSU System moving ahead with South Metro Denver plans

Dean Ajay Menon leading effort to coordinate, launch new presence

Former Astronaut Ron Sega to serve as liaison to local business community

DENVER – September 5, 2013 – The Colorado State University System is moving ahead with plans to launch a significant presence in Denver’s South Metro region early next year.

The CSU-South Metro project is part of a strategic effort to showcase a new model for higher education that caters to both students and the business community, demonstrating how graduate and undergraduate programs can be delivered in a scalable, innovative and collaborative format.

“This is something being driven by business leaders in the South Metro region, and we’re honored that they approached the CSU System as their first choice for a higher education partner,” CSU System Chancellor Mike Martin said. “We’ve looked very closely at this for nearly a year and see tremendous opportunity for the CSU System to bring real value to local students, families and industry in Denver’s South Metro area.”

The CSU System includes CSU in Fort Collins, CSU-Pueblo and the 100-percent online CSU-Global Campus. The South Metro region in Denver refers to the area that stretches from the Denver Tech Center south into Douglas County and from roughly Chatfield Reservoir on the west to Parker on the east.

“The CSU South Metro Denver presence is one of the last essential elements for us to prosper economically in this global environment,” said John Brackney, CEO of the South Metro Denver...
Chamber of Commerce. “We are deeply appreciative of CSU for its desire to leverage the strength of our businesses community, specifically in relationship to STEM disciplines, and for considering the possibilities of cooperative education in direct partnership with major employers. We also applaud the efforts in cooperation with other higher education systems. Business leaders have been advocating a 4-year public institute of higher education in South Metro Denver for decades and now, thanks to CSU, that vision is coming to reality soon.”

The first classes will begin in January 2014 and are part of a systems engineering master’s degree program from CSU in Fort Collins. In fall 2014, the CSU System will coordinate with its three campuses and other academic partners to include undergraduate degree offerings in business and nursing, with the prospect of adding more programs quickly based on community demand.

Start-up costs will be kept low by leveraging resources and faculty from all three CSU institutions to launch the CSU-South Metro venture, even looking at joint appointments with other regional higher education partners to ensure the availability of a strong faculty core. The CSU System is also coordinating with local community colleges to reduce or eliminate overlap and provide graduates with a clear pathway to a high-quality CSU education once they’ve completed appropriate lower division coursework or earned an associate’s degree.

“We want to partner with community colleges in this market so that graduates don’t have to leave Denver or commute to continue their college education,” Martin said. “This is one of the last highly populated regions in Colorado that is not being served in a meaningful way by a public 4-year institution of higher education, and we believe that through collaboration and partnerships the CSU System can help build a new model to deliver local, high-quality degree programs that meet the needs of the South Metro region’s students and businesses.”

Classes will be offered in a blended fashion; some courses will be taught with in-person instructors and others will be offered in an online format. Initially, on-site instruction will be delivered in local corporate training centers or in classroom space provided by education partners, but the CSU System is actively looking at opportunities to build a new facility in the region in the next three to five years.

Following nearly a year of detailed planning and due diligence, the CSU System Board of Governors approved a business plan for the CSU-South Metro project in August. In recent weeks, CSU College of Business Dean Ajay Menon was tapped to lead a committee that is charged with implementing the plan as well as branding, marketing and student recruitment. Menon recently completed his term as Colorado’s first chief innovation officer, where he laid the foundation for the mission of making Colorado the most innovative state in the nation.

“The CSU System’s three campuses already have high-quality programs that can be adapted and quickly delivered in Denver’s South Metro region,” Menon said. “Over the next few months,
we’ll be looking more closely at how we bring those resources and assets online in a strategic and sustainable way that also meets regional needs and expectations.”

Ronald M. Sega, CSU’s vice president and Enterprise Executive for Energy and the Environment, will serve as a liaison to the business community in the South Metro region and as the lead academic advisor on engineering programs. Sega is a former NASA astronaut and retired major general in the U.S. Air Force.

“One of the real opportunities of the CSU-South Metro project is to provide key graduate-level programs that clearly fill strategic needs for the region’s business community,” Sega said. “I’m looking forward to meeting with our corporate partners in the coming weeks and months to discuss how we can serve them and support the region’s strong track record of economic growth.”

ABOUT THE CSU SYSTEM
The CSU System Board of Governors has nine voting members, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the State Senate, and six non-voting members who are faculty and student representatives from CSU, CSU-Global Campus and CSU-Pueblo. The board provides oversight to ensure effective management, accountability and leadership at all CSU System universities. More information: www.csusystem.edu.

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