

## OVERVIEW:

Pursuant to Colorado law, on August 13, 2019, after more than a year of discussion and study, the Salida School District Board of Education voted to place a question on the November 2019 ballot. This question for Salida-area voters would enable the Salida School District to join the Colorado Mountain College tax district. It reads:

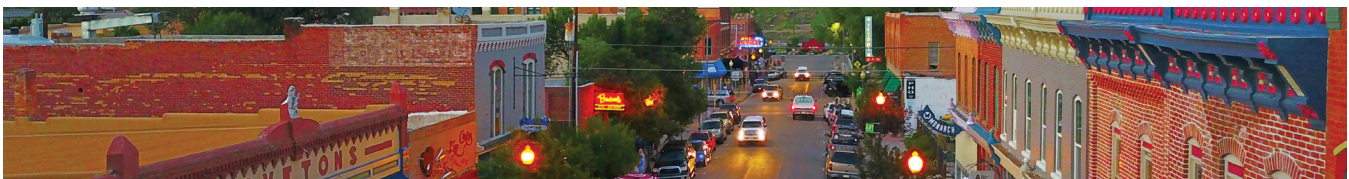
*Shall the property within the boundaries of Salida School District Number R32J be included in the boundaries of the Colorado Mountain College District, and in so doing expand the availability of low cost college degrees and certificates; continuing education and lifelong learning; tuition-free concurrent enrollment for high school students; and skilled trades and industry-specific training, on behalf of the residents of the Salida School District Number R32J?*

Given that state law requires votes in **both** the district seeking annexation as well as in the existing local college district, the Colorado Mountain College Board of Trustees voted unanimously on August 28, 2019, to add a ballot question inviting the Salida School District into the CMC tax district. This question will appear on ballots in the existing CMC district. It reads:

*Without increasing taxes to the current residents of the Colorado Mountain College District, shall the Colorado Mountain College District be enlarged to include property within the boundaries of Salida School District Number R32J?*

The question adopted by the Salida School District is not similar to ballot questions with tax impacts, but instead is phrased as a proposed adjustment to the boundary of the existing college tax district. The question does not adjust the existing authorities vested in the Colorado Mountain College Board of Trustees. In other words, the question allows CMC to exercise its existing authorities in a new region (including assessment of the CMC mill levy), but has no other effect on the college's governance, mission, or authorities.

Because the Salida School District question is not a "TABOR" question, the Clerk and Recorder offices in Chaffee and Fremont counties will not prepare a "blue book" to accompany it. The purpose of this document is to share information that would normally have been included in a traditional TABOR blue book. While unofficial, this "FAQ" document is intended to provide clarity for all residents and businesses of the Salida School District and demonstrate the effect of CMC's mill levy on properties in this region.



### COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE STRUCTURE AND MISSION

**QUESTION:** What is the difference between being in CMC's service area and being in the CMC district?

**ANSWER:** *Service Area:* For decades, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education has organized the state into service areas for the state's 14 community colleges and three multiple-mission institutions (Adams State, Colorado Mesa, and Colorado Mountain College). These service areas intend to provide clarity regarding regional college programming for certificate- and associate-level credentials. The goal of service areas is to ensure that every region in the state is assigned to at least one accessible college, especially those in rural and remote parts of the state. Service areas are an administrative concept that provide no additional or supplementary funding to colleges and universities. Currently Grand County, Jackson County, and both the Salida and the Buena Vista school districts are within Colorado Mountain College's service area.

*In-District:* As one of two local-district colleges in the state, Colorado Mountain College has a taxing district that covers all or part of six counties (Lake, Summit, Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, and Routt [Steamboat Springs]). This multi-county district allows the college to assess taxes on residential and commercial properties, much like a school district. Nearly 70% of all revenues to Colorado Mountain College arrive through property taxes. Therefore, residents who live in the college's taxing district have significantly increased access to a comprehensive array of classes, academic programs, facilities, and instructional technologies, all at a very affordable cost to students. The district also supports the college's personnel, infrastructure, and general operating expenses.

**QUESTION:** If the Salida School District were to join the CMC taxing district, what would be the effect on local businesses?

**ANSWER:** Supporting local economies is a principal mission of Colorado Mountain College. In fact, CMC got its start from the Glenwood Springs Resort and Chamber Association, which still maintains its offices in a CMC facility. In 1982, the Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce was central to that community electing to join the CMC district.

CMC is the only postsecondary institution operating in the counties that compose its service area. Consequently, it is the only local producer of college graduates for local employers. CMC is responsive to the needs of each community it serves and partners with local businesses and organizations to provide the programming they need. From nursing and allied health to teacher education to EMS and ski area operations to culinary arts and hospitality, CMC trains the workforce needed in mountain communities.

*For example, CMC met with school district superintendents and employees in the college's district to determine whether there was a need for local teacher education. School district administrators said they wanted to hire locally, have education students spend more time in the classrooms where they would teach, and have those students learn enhanced skills needed in the area's diverse classrooms. The college then created a teacher education program that makes it easier for schools to get to know and hire new employees, puts student teachers into the classroom from their very first year at CMC, and prepares students to provide culturally and linguistically diverse education. Moreover, nearly all CMC teacher education candidates are graduates of high schools in the CMC service area.*

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If the voters approve the annexation proposal, most businesses will pay a higher property tax on commercial property compared to the taxes paid by homeowners for residential property. See the questions below under the heading “The Potential Impact of Annexation.”

**QUESTION: Would local businesses be able to use CMC for training their workforce? For example, could a rafting company use the college to train its guides in required emergency medicine classes?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. CMC partners with businesses to either develop training and programming that they need, or can involve them in existing program offerings. The cost of these programs varies depending on the type and length of each course.

*For example, CMC Leadville provides annual training for Vail Resorts’ new groomer drivers on their mountain. Faculty member Jason Gusaas shares his considerable expertise in lectures, and experienced groomer drivers provide 1:1 instruction to new employees. Jason has also developed a “train the trainers” workshop for experienced drivers.*

*CMC Leadville also offers welding classes each summer tailored to ski industry needs. Staff from many resorts have learned valuable welding skills applicable to mountain operations.*

**QUESTION: How might local nonprofits or government organizations benefit from having CMC in the community?**

**ANSWER:** Similar to how CMC works with the business community, the college works with nonprofits and government organizations to create and deliver the programming needed to support mountain communities. These entities also benefit from having CMC as a partner in developing the capacity and opportunities in the community.

*For example, CMC has entered into a one-of-a-kind apprenticeship program with the White River National Forest covering much of CMC’s service area; has trained the majority of law enforcement officers in the mountain region, including numerous chiefs; and has created a teacher fellowship program that provides local teacher candidates a \$10,000 housing stipend and a guaranteed job in mountain school districts.*

**QUESTION: Would local teachers be able to teach at CMC?**

**ANSWER:** When credentialing instructors to teach credit-bearing classes for Colorado Mountain College, the college follows the guidelines and recommendations of the Higher Learning Commission, its official accrediting agency. Following these guidelines, CMC requires an instructor teaching most credit courses in the arts and sciences to have a master’s degree and at least 18 graduate credits in the subject being taught.

For career and technical classes such as carpentry, automotive, or welding, CMC can hire an instructor based on industry certifications and work experience in the field to be taught. Relevant postsecondary education is always a plus, but not necessarily required.

**QUESTION: What can local adults and retirees expect from CMC?**

**ANSWER:** CMC offers a variety of classes in response to what each community requests. Many college credit and non-credit classes can be taken for continuing education, skills upgrading, or personal enrichment.

The college also provides part-time teaching opportunities for those who have the required experience and credentials. Instructors who want to teach non-credit community education classes are more easily certified than those teaching credit courses.

The college is committed to quality teaching and learning experiences. It interviews and hires instructors based on their ability to uphold its expectations of quality and excellence.

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

**QUESTION: What is concurrent enrollment?**

**ANSWER:** [Concurrent enrollment](#) is when a high school student is enrolled in courses that earn them both high school and college credit. College credits are paid for by participating school districts.

**QUESTION: If a school district joins the CMC district, how would concurrent enrollment change?**

**ANSWER:** If an eligible school district is within the CMC service area and votes to be annexed into the CMC district, the tuition currently paid by the school district to CMC would be reduced from \$170 per credit hour to \$80 per credit hour. Students would also have access to more class options as part of the concurrent enrollment program. Additionally, school districts in the college tax district may enjoy the added benefit of having full-time CMC instructors in their schools to deliver instruction.

It is common for students in the CMC tax district to earn a semester or more of coursework toward a college degree; some even [earn an associate degree](#) or postsecondary certificate at the time they are earning their high school diploma.

**QUESTION: What age does a student need to be to take a concurrent enrollment class?**

**ANSWER:** [Qualified students](#) must meet all prerequisites for the college classes they want to take. They also must be under the age of 21 and enrolled in the ninth grade or higher.

**QUESTION: If our local students already take classes at CMC, why do we have to vote to annex into their college system?**

**ANSWER:** Annexing a school district into the CMC district would reduce tuition; expand comprehensive supports such as disability services, tutoring, and counseling; and allow for more local staff and programs, as well as the full benefit of the college's central administrative offices (human resources, payroll, financial aid, student affairs, legal, facilities, etc.). Joining the district would also allow the college to invest in facilities and equipment otherwise unavailable, such as nursing simulation labs and information technologies.

Currently, Chaffee County receives limited academic programming and academic support equivalent to the state's general higher education support or a few thousand dollars per student. Elsewhere in the CMC district, the college invests more than \$15,000 per enrolled student – resources used to support full-time faculty, state-of-the-art facilities and technologies, comprehensive academic equipment, and 120 programs ranging from certificates to bachelor's degrees. Moreover, residents of the CMC tax district may enroll in any of the college's 11 campuses at the "in-district" tuition rate of \$80/credit.

### THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF ANNEXATION

**QUESTION: CMC doesn't have a campus in Salida. Would a new facility be built? And if so, where will students take classes in the meantime?**

**ANSWER:** While CMC foresees having a physical presence in Salida in collaboration with local partners in the future, if annexation is successful the college will first prioritize delivering educational services immediately. This could mean that, in the short term, classes would be held in existing buildings at the school district offices, in classrooms at the high school, or in other available facilities in the community. However, apprenticeships can take place at work sites or offices of local businesses.

Many classes are held in the field where hands-on training can take place, as well. A "campus" is anywhere that learning is, or can, take place. Though a permanent physical structure may not be constructed immediately, CMC is confident that there will not be a shortage of places for classes to be held while the college collaborates with community partners to design and potentially construct a physical campus that serves the community well.

**QUESTION: If I vote for annexation, am I also voting to accept a CMC mill levy that will increase my taxes?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. A vote for annexation would increase local tax assessments by 3.997 mills. See the next question for a detailed explanation.

Unlike most colleges and universities in America, CMC's business model is based on property tax revenues and not on tuition. This allows the college to offer a comprehensive array of classes, programs, and services to smaller numbers of students – a reality in delivering education in remote mountain towns.

In many ways, CMC's finances resemble those of school districts. This model allows the college to serve rural communities that may have lower enrollment numbers than larger metropolitan areas, at a very reasonable cost to students. This model also enables CMC to be responsive to the needs of each individual community and offer courses that apply more specifically to local interests and workforce needs rather than national trends or academic fads.

**QUESTION: I really do not understand mill levies. Can you explain them to me?**

**ANSWER:** A mill levy is a tax that is applied to the assessed value of a property. Note that in Colorado, properties are not taxed on their total market values, but rather a much smaller percentage



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of it (known as the “assessed value”). Currently, 7.15% of a residential property’s assessed value is subject to taxes. For commercial/nonresidential properties, 29% of assessed value is subject to taxation. The mill levy, and the resulting tax assessment, will be part of future property tax bills if the annexation proposal is approved by the voters.

### **QUESTION: How much is the mill levy, and how much would it increase my taxes?**

**ANSWER:** If the assessor fixes your home’s market value at \$300,000, the amount of that value being taxed (i.e., the assessed value) is 7.15% of the market value, or \$21,450. The college’s mill levy of 0.003997 per dollar would then be applied to the assessed value of \$21,450, and property taxes on your home therefore would increase by an extra \$86.34 for the year.

A commercial/nonresidential property valued at \$300,000 would be taxed on 29% of that value, which is \$87,000. The mill levy for commercial property is the same as the residential rate, which is 0.003997 per dollar. Therefore, the total tax added to that property this year would be \$143.89.

### **QUESTION: Does the mill levy keep increasing over time so that my taxes continue to go up?**

**ANSWER:** The college has maintained the 3.997 for decades. In 2018, voters granted the CMC Board of Trustees the ability to raise the mill levy to maintain revenues at consistent levels, but it has not yet exercised that right. If the trustees do use this authority, total tax revenues to the college would not increase.

### **QUESTION: In the financial information you published, you show that if the Salida School District were to be annexed into the CMC district, in the first several years the revenue raised is more than the cost to run the local campus. Where does the extra money go?**

**ANSWER:** Those revenues would be pooled into the college’s general fund along with revenues from the balance of the CMC tax district. Annually, the trustees set aside unused operating revenues into various reserve accounts, including those for future investments in academic buildings.

In the CMC district, all revenues collected from taxpayers college-wide are pooled and disbursed based on the number of students. However, the CMC Board of Trustees has committed that revenue generated from Chaffee County (Salida and Poncha Springs/R32J) will be set aside in a designated reserve for five years. This reserve fund would then be available to support program expansion, operating costs, and a potential physical campus in the future without impacting the current district during this “start-up” period.

### **QUESTION: What happens when the cost to run the campus is greater than the amount our taxes bring in? Do we pass another mill levy and increase our taxes again?**

**ANSWER:** Like all campuses in the CMC service area, overall operating costs are covered by the college general fund. Revenues are NOT restricted to a particular district, which allows the college to manage fluctuations in industries and economies throughout its service area while providing consistent services. No new mill levies will be assessed to address revenue fluctuations in a particular region.

# Salida Annexation / Frequently Asked Questions

**QUESTION: Will the college bring in lots of out-of-town students? Affordable housing is so tight, won't we need to build housing for them?**

**ANSWER:** It is possible that some students might move to Salida from outside of the region to attend CMC. However, the vast majority of students will likely hail from local mountain communities. Generally speaking, at nonresidential campuses, such as the one conceptualized for Salida, more than 80% of enrolled students are in-district residents.

**QUESTION: If the mill levy is passed in November, how quickly will classes start?**

**ANSWER:** Classes are already offered in Salida, and the college would phase in a number of existing and new programs in the first three years. Please refer to the Salida Annexation Feasibility Study Fact Sheet for more information.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

**QUESTION: What is the cost for tuition for students at CMC – whether in district or in service area? What would be the comparable cost at other public colleges and universities in Colorado?**

**ANSWER:** [Students living within the CMC district](#) pay \$80 per credit hour, whereas students who live within the CMC service area pay \$170 per credit hour (bachelor's degrees in nursing and education have a slightly higher tuition rate). In 2019, tuition at CU Boulder is roughly \$418 per credit hour, and tuition at CSU is roughly \$390 per credit hour.

Tuition and fees for one year (30 credit hours). Source: CDHE Tuition and Fees Report, Fiscal Year 2018-19.

### CMC IN-DISTRICT

\$2,500

### CMC IN-STATE

\$5,500

### Colorado Mesa University

\$9,243

### Western State Colorado University

\$10,114

### University of Colorado - Boulder

\$12,534

**QUESTION: Are CMC class credits transferable to other colleges? Are classes at other institutions transferable to CMC?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Most CMC classes are part of Colorado's "guaranteed transfer" program. These courses are guaranteed to transfer to other public Colorado institutions, and almost all will transfer as elective credits in Colorado and around the country. For more information on this, please follow this

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[link](#). Conversely, many classes transfer from other institutions of higher learning to CMC, particularly if they are part of Colorado’s “guaranteed transfer” program. It’s always best to send transcripts to CMC to have credits evaluated for transfer. For more information on this, please follow this [link](#).

**QUESTION: What is the academic standing or reputation of CMC? Will I, or my child, receive a high-quality education at CMC?**

**ANSWER:** Colorado Mountain College is [accredited](#) by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). The HLC accredits all of the public colleges and universities in Colorado and hundreds of colleges and universities in a 19-state region across the United States. CMC has also received numerous awards for programs and [affordability](#).

**QUESTION: What does it cost in-district adults and retirees to take college credits or adult education classes?**

**ANSWER:** Based on residency, tuition for credit courses is the same for all students, except for bachelor’s degrees in nursing and education, which are slightly higher. Course fees for [community education](#) and enrichment classes vary depending on the type and length of the specific course.

*For example, recent non-credit courses offered in Chaffee County included a one-night, three-hour beatnik poetry workshop, which cost \$10. Beaded-jewelry and basket-making workshops were also one-day, three-hour courses, which each cost \$30 because materials were supplied. A community education yoga class is offered in Salida two afternoons per week and costs \$140 for a full semester.*

**QUESTION: Isn’t Colorado Mountain College already in Chaffee County, in Buena Vista?**

**ANSWER:** CMC’s Chaffee County Academic Center has been located in Buena Vista for the past 12 years. During the 2018-19 academic year the Buena Vista School District leased part of the building for use as a preschool, and considered extending that lease or buying the building. In preparation for that use of the building, the college moved out of the building in spring of 2019. Subsequently the school district decided not to extend the lease or buy the building, and the college is currently seeking other uses for the building.

The Buena Vista School District considered putting a measure on the ballot this year, to join the CMC district. They decided not to do so just yet, and may consider doing that in 2021, as such questions can only go to the voters in odd-numbered years.

Although the Buena Vista School District is not going to continue its lease of CMC’s building, CMC will continue to offer classes to BV high school students if the school district chooses to continue with CMC as its concurrent enrollment partner. Under the Colorado concurrent enrollment law, school districts may use any institution of higher education to provide this service. This fall the college offered eight courses for community and high school students and those classes were offered out of classroom spaces in the middle school and high school in Buena Vista.

*Note: This document was prepared in response to commonly asked questions regarding Salida’s proposed annexation into the CMC district. As additional information is requested, updates will be made. For more information, go to: <http://coloradomtn.edu/salida/>*