Research Methodology

Methodology- Focus Groups & Community Outreach Survey

The Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI) analyzed the focus group and survey responses using a systematic qualitative approach grounded in thematic analysis principles. Each transcript and survey comment was first reviewed using open coding to identify recurring ideas and language patterns (Saldana, 2021). Coding was guided by a structured protocol emphasizing theme development, phrase usage, and participant emphasis. A codebook was developed iteratively, informed by repeated phrasing and conceptual clusters across stakeholder groups. This codebook included five primary categories: *Resonate, Did Not Resonate, Differentiator, New Ideas,* and *Questions.* Each category contained subthemes derived from participant language (Saldana, 2021). To ensure reliability, two independent reviewers conducted initial coding, followed by a second round of thematic coding by two new reviewers. This process allowed cross-analysis across all respondent groups and data sources (focus groups and outreach survey). Inter-coder agreement checks were performed at each stage to maintain consistency (Mao, 2017). Identifying information was removed prior to analysis, and all data was securely stored with plans for deletion upon project completion.

Every comment was read in full by the project lead, Dr. Robin Parent, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff, who verified thematic assignments and pulled detailed phrasing from the raw data to confirm accuracy and authenticity. The final step in the analysis incorporated generative AI to synthesize findings and explore potential refinements to the differentiator themes. A thorough AI prompt, guided by discourse analysis methods focused on theme, phrase, and clause use, was applied to each population group and each of the five primary coded categories. This was followed by cross-analysis for each question across all respondents (Cook et al., 2025; Gee, 2025). AI-generated outputs included potential revised differentiators based on the aggregated findings. Two polished differentiators were then finalized and refined by Dr. Robin Parent, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and stakeholder input.

The two refined differentiator themes: *People, Place, & Purpose* and *Innovation with Heart* were presented to the University Leadership Team for feedback and revisions. Feedback came through the ULT facilitated discussion provided information, MSTeams chats, and emails. This information helped to develop the next phase of survey questions and prompts.

Methodology- Differentiator Themes Feedback Survey

The next phase of the Differentiator Project focused on gathering feedback on the two refined differentiator themes: *People, Place, & Purpose* and *Innovation with Heart*. This phase aimed to understand perspectives from internal and external stakeholders on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of each theme and converge toward a single recommendation for campus leadership. Survey data was collected through Qualtrics and organized by population group (faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders). All identifying information was removed, and data was securely stored for analysis.

The analysis process began with the Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI), completing a full review of all survey responses. This was followed by a two-part AI-assisted review. First, sentiment analysis categorized feedback as positive, neutral, or negative for each differentiator and population group. Next, resonance analysis identified what aspects of each differentiator resonated and what did not. Emergent themes were extracted to capture core values, concerns, and opportunities expressed by respondents. Keyword extraction was also performed to identify high-frequency phrases and concepts that reflected dominant ideas.

Following this, a comparative review combined outputs from the OSI team and Dr. Robin Parent's independent analysis. This step involved cross-checking themes for alignment and divergence, identifying gaps in representation, and synthesizing insights into a consolidated theme map. The last step incorporated generative AI guided by discourse analysis methods focused on theme, phrase, and clause use. AI prompts were applied to each population group and each coded category, followed by cross-analysis across all respondents (Cook et al., 2025; Gee, 2025). AI-generated outputs included potential refinements. One polished differentiator was then finalized and revised by Dr. Parent, ensuring that the recommendation reflected both data-driven insights and institutional priorities. The final differentiator: Powered by People, Grounded in Research, Connected to Colorado was presented to the University Leadership Team for feedback and revisions. Feedback was again collected through the facilitated ULT meeting and then through individual wordsmithing through phone calls and emails.

References

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