

Message from Chancellor Marks



Dear faculty and staff,

Over the past week, our campus was pulsing with energy as students from across the world and all four corners of our state started their first week of classes. I welcome our Lynx community to a new academic year, including the more than 250 new faculty and staff members who have recently joined us. I had the pleasure of connecting with many of our faculty colleagues at New Faculty Orientation and worked alongside staff members as we welcomed new students to their campus home during move-in.

As we enter this academic year, I couldn't help but reflect on the recent momentum of this community. Research awards were up 55% in the past fiscal year; we earned our status as an [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution](#); and we have continued to invest in our people with a compensation study underway, the development of an action plan to support the Instructional, Research, and Clinical [\(IRC\) Task Force Report](#), and the introduction of leader- and supervisory-level programs for faculty and staff.

I hope that you will take a moment to watch this brief [welcome-back video](#) that showcases our vibrant campus community.

When we reflect beyond the last few weeks or months, it's important to recognize that we have transformed this campus together in many meaningful ways, including:

- The opening of the Lola & Rob Salazar Wellness Center to encourage healthy minds, bodies, and spirits on campus (the center turns five this year)
- The construction of City Heights, our first-year freshman residence hall, and the accompanying Learning Commons building two years ago
- The collective creation of our [2030 Strategic Plan](#) that prioritizes equity, student learning and success, and our people
- The launching of our Ninth Street Historic Park initiative to honor our past and create meaningful moments for student scholarship and community engagement, culminating in the reopening of Centennial House
- Achieving and maintaining our No. 1 ranking for social mobility in Colorado
- Introducing new academic programs in health administration, entrepreneurship, data science, and public policy, among others, and a

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- new apprenticeship program in construction project management to provide work-based learning opportunities for students and industry
- Standing up our spring Microcredential and Badging Working Groups, which resulted in actionable recommendations informed by faculty and staff for developing and standardizing credentials and pathways for career-connected education. These efforts are part of our larger Digital Strategy established by a campus-wide task force in AY 2021–22.

But our work isn't done. We have so much more potential as Lynx. And I challenge us, even when we encounter challenges as all universities do, that we remain focused on our mission and our potential.

That is why, in the year ahead, we will continue to transform our **academic, research, and creative enterprise; student success and strategic enrollment; workplace;** and **budget** through strategies that improve how we serve our students and how we work. Together, these efforts will frame our future as an innovative urban institution committed to making education work for all.

Academic transformation and research & creative excellence

As an agile university educating students seeking social mobility, we must constantly evaluate our academic offerings and operations to keep pace with learner demand and workforce needs. As previewed in the spring, **Provost Constancio Nakuma** will soon send out a call to participate in a community-led project working on recommendations to reimagine our general education core curriculum and the way we offer and deliver courses to students. This effort will help ensure we are meeting students where they are, creating more consistent standards and practices, and ultimately ensuring our long-term financial health as an institution.

Relatedly, we will soon share the details of our Microcredential and Badging initiative, which is a vital part of our academic programming mix and digital strategy as we become a university for life. There is tremendous market demand to offer and validate skills through nontraditional programs, so we must double down in creating and clarifying pathways for our learners and show how they lead to personal growth and better careers. I am so appreciative of all of our faculty and staff who have been working to make our academic offerings more stackable and accessible and better positioning us to lead in this space. **Katie Linder**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Innovation and Strategy, is spearheading these initiatives and will share findings and next steps in the next few weeks based on working group reports generated last spring.

Building on the growth from last year, we will also continue to invest in our research and creative enterprise this year, including the launch of the [Faculty](#)

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[Grants Academy](#). You will be hearing more from **Phillip De Leon**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research & Creative Activities, about ongoing research opportunities and faculty wins in this area.

Please also be sure to join us for Future Fest, our annual showcase of faculty, staff, and student research and discovery on Oct. 3, and stay tuned for more exciting research developments this year.

Student success and strategic enrollment transformation

Student success and strategic enrollment are vitally important to fulfilling our mission, increasing access to education, and to the financial strength of the university. Enrolling and retaining our students is everyone's responsibility at CU Denver, so it will be the primary focus area of the year ahead.

By building a culture of enrollment and retention ownership at all levels of the university, we can strengthen our enrollment pipeline, help eliminate barriers that contribute to attrition or longer time to completion, and solidify our financial future. As a tuition-dependent institution—where nearly three-quarters of our university budget comes from tuition and fees—enrollment is top of mind as we work to rebound and grow our enrollment and continue our strategic budget realignment work.

As some of you may remember, members of our campus community engaged in an inclusive process to develop a Strategic Enrollment Management plan for our campus. Many of you having been working with Provost Nakuma and the Office of Academic Affairs; Monique L. Snowden, Senior Vice Chancellor for Strategic Enrollment and Student Success and her division; and our deans and their teams to advance this important work. This year, we are moving from planning to implementation of the strategy, and a few big areas of focus will be to continue to identify and market programs that have the greatest opportunities for growth, position us as the No. 1 transfer university in the state, and standardize our advising practices to enhance students' experiences and outcomes.

I have asked **Provost Nakuma** and **Dr. Snowden** to provide additional details about our enrollment and retention initiatives early in the semester.

Workplace transformation

As we strive to become a best place to work, we continue to prioritize fair and equitable compensation and the inclusivity of our faculty, staff, and students. This year we will complete the [Comprehensive Compensation Collaborative \(3C\) Project](#), which aims to identify areas of compression, equity issues, and market fluctuations and will result in a proposed compensation strategy for the campus. We will also launch campus-wide focus groups to identify ideas and actions that contribute to service excellence, employee engagement, and organizational

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success.

In addition, faculty, staff, and students will have a chance to make their voices heard through the Campus and Workplace Culture Pulse Survey this fall. This is an ongoing survey program that enables us to assess our community members' sense of belonging, as well as academic and workplace cultures, and take meaningful actions to address these issues. In the coming weeks, **Ann Sherman**, Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, and **Antonio Farias**, Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, will provide more details about the survey and our commitment to real action and continuous improvement in these areas.

Budget transformation

Last year we began our [Strategic Realignment of Resources Initiative](#) and made tremendous progress toward improving our financial health and enhancing our ability to deliver on our mission with greater effectiveness. As I shared at the [completion of Phase 1](#), nearly 1,000 members of our community engaged in the process through a variety of info sessions, online submission forms, and more.

As we enter into this academic year, we know that enrollment numbers are down for the fall semester, which impacts the work we all need to do together to shore up our efforts to enroll, retain, and graduate more students; create a strategic and sustainable budget planning process; curb our expenses in line with our budget reality; and grow where we have the greatest potential.

I will ask **EVC Sherman** to share more information in the next month, and I invite our shared governance leaders and the broader community to participate proactively in the process as we transform our budget and financial planning to ensure our long-term success.

In closing

You will hear more about all these transformations in the coming weeks and months as well as opportunities to engage and contribute to the success of CU Denver. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all faculty and staff for your hard work, especially in these busy first weeks of the fall semester, and again convey my excitement for the year ahead.



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