



# Equity Task Force Report

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**Special thanks to:** Lauren Hebert, Kris Wood and the Inworks/Comcast Media and Technology Center team

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# Background

The Equity Task Force was formed in October 2020 as a result of Chancellor Marks' [Equity Listening Sessions](#) -- 20 listening sessions over her first 10 days with 172 people and received dozens of emails sharing perspectives. [Participants](#) included Faculty Assembly, Staff Council, and Student Government Association leaders, students (all levels: undergraduate, master's and doctoral), faculty, staff, and alumni from all eight schools and colleges as well as 60 university units.

Chaired by Antwan Jefferson, PhD, Associate Clinical Professor, School of Education and Human Development and John Ronquillo, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Public Affairs, the task force worked over the 2020-2021 academic year to delve into the core of CU Denver equity, diversity and inclusion challenges, including structural barriers to hiring and promoting underrepresented faculty and staff. It brought together nearly 150 faculty, staff and students to explore a host of equity, diversity and inclusive issues and recommend an ambitious action plan and associated investment priorities.

The Equity Task Force was supported by 72 university staff, faculty and students representing six action teams, three Resource focused teams: Data, Policy and Exemplars, and three Content focused Teams: People, Environment and Curriculum. Each team focused on specific target areas where the university should improve around curriculum, work environment, accountability, transparency and university policy.

This report in part mirrors the Empowered by Our Inclusive Excellence Vision Team report for CU Denver Strategic Planning 2030 and has the additions of a roadmap and funding recommendations for a \$1 million DEI Innovation Fund that will build the foundation for becoming the exemplar equity serving institution.

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# Vision

## Vision Statement:

CU Denver aspires to be the exemplar equity serving institution. Here, we courageously humanize our systems and policies to foster a diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus dedicated to the success of every member of our community. We actively identify and eliminate barriers caused by social, racial, and economic injustices as well as those caused by the privileging of dominant forms of knowledge and ways of being (evident in whiteness, sexism, racism, heteronormativity, ableism, and other forms of discrimination). We endeavor to create and sustain a culture of belonging for all.

## Dynamic Goals:

1. **Redefine Success:** CU Denver's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) prioritizes, informs, and incentivizes the evaluation and definition of student, faculty, and staff success. By empowering our inclusive excellence, we unlock the potential for everyone to succeed.
2. **Share Responsibility:** CU Denver's faculty, staff, and students share the responsibility for creating and sustaining a just, safe, and inclusive campus, workplace, and community. Sharing this responsibility lessens the burdens of those harmed by social inequality, promotes a spirit of solidarity, and engages the entire community to ensure transformative justice.
3. **Develop Systems:** We develop, utilize, and continuously improve systems that value relationships, create community, and actively support and serve peoples of historically marginalized identities in order to reduce bias, create and sustain equity, and ensure broad and inclusive access to CU Denver.

## Strategies:

- 1-1: Define and boldly communicate our commitment to EDI
- 1-2: Create & fund an Institutional Equity Advocacy Council
- 1-3: Redefine CU Denver's educational experience to infuse EDI throughout curriculum & student life
- 1-4: Embed EDI in recruiting, hiring & retention policies & practices
- 1-5: Recognize faculty, staff, and students for advancing EDI
- 1-6: Build EDI culture by investing in formal and informal professional and organizational learning
- 2-1: Ensure sustained physical, technological & financial access
- 2-2: Courageously practice accountability to those we impact and acknowledge the role of various forms of harm, including displacement, invalidation, silencing, and retaliation
- 3-1: Diversify CU Denver leadership
- 3-2: Improve CU Denver safety practices

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# What We Aspire to Look Like in 2030

CU Denver embodies a bold commitment to Inclusive Excellence and building our reputation as a dynamic, responsive, and flexible equity serving institution that ensures the success of our diverse students, staff, and faculty. This represents our commitment to inclusive excellence and our awareness of the value of diverse voices and experiences to our collective success as a major public, urban, research institution. In particular, CU Denver will:

- Lead with our commitment to EDI and ensure integrity in achieving EDI goals
- Always align our EDI mission, values, and goals through the work of staff and faculty
- Be courageous when identifying and addressing any forms of inequality, hate, and harm that impact CU Denver students, staff, and faculty
- Continue to learn about ourselves, about one another, from one another, and continue to redefine our university identity and our practices to reflect that inclusive excellence is dynamic, adaptive, and aspirational
- Utilize all of our resources in bold and courageous ways to ensure that we do not cause, shelter, or sustain harm to our immediate university community or to other communities.

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## Where We Excel

### *CU Denver is a richly diverse community of lifelong learners, teachers, researchers, and higher education professionals*

Students want to come to CU Denver because they see it as a place of opportunity, affirmation, and authenticity. Our inclusive excellence is reflected in a uniquely diverse student body, faculty, and staff. At CU Denver, we are student oriented, and we value the supporting roles of staff who enable student success, along with the research and creative accomplishments of faculty that make our institution a forward-thinking hub of innovation. We celebrate our diversity and prioritize the affirmation of our identities through student organizations and faculty and staff affinity groups. Together we recognize the critical importance of further embedding the values of EDI within our growing, dynamic institution.

### *CU Denver educates with vision and prioritizes access and awareness*

CU Denver strives to exemplify opportunity from the moment a student makes contact all the way to graduation day. Whether students matriculate here in their first year or transfer from another institution, CU Denver strives to provide the right paths to success. We provide students with the most up-to-date technologies and modalities of learning; whether students are full-time, part-time, or online, we are committed to being a nimble and innovative institution of higher education that meets students where they are. We aim for inclusion and accessibility so that nothing impedes student success.

### *CU Denver promotes a holistic approach to the student experience and environment*

CU Denver not only offers opportunities to learn, but also opportunities to belong. Our students are highly conscious of a constantly changing world and have the ability to enhance their experience outside the classroom with a variety of student organizations and student-driven initiatives that reflect the values and importance of identities and intersectionalities. Students benefit not only from various EDI initiatives within their academic units, but also from a highly engaged Center for Identity and Inclusion that offers programming, training, and developmental opportunities, all while receiving a world-class University of Colorado education in the heart of downtown Denver.

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## **Where We Struggle**

### ***CU Denver must further prioritize the value of our people and better reflect our diverse composition***

While we celebrate a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, the leadership of the university must better reflect that diversity in school, college, and business units, as well as in top-level administration. We share a committed interest in further diffusing EDI across the university, however, the administrative functions of such have traditionally fallen to a singular administrator rather than an administrative team that can better support the advancement and progress of EDI. We must be more inclusive with regard to family support systems that support CU Denver students. We must decentralize whiteness and decolonize our pedagogy to be more inclusive of other cultural, non-Western ways of learning and knowledge. We must pursue equity in pay, provide professional development opportunities for our historically disadvantaged communities, and construct better avenues for conflict resolution. In an ever-changing world where tragedy and evil occur, we must also be vigilant and ready to support our diverse communities when they are afflicted.

### ***CU Denver must reduce and remove institutional barriers to educational success***

Enabling and emboldening student success will require ongoing evaluation of various curricula and pedagogical techniques. Doing so may help identify potential biases, inaccuracies, or dated and ineffective modalities of learning that may impede success. CU Denver must find ways to better communicate available resources, enhance physical access as well as access to technology for disabilities communities within the university, and more equitably equip our students with the right tools for success.

### ***CU Denver must better establish and embed EDI as a shared institutional value and responsibility***

Our unique position as Colorado's only public urban research university gives us ample opportunity to better define EDI in a place-based context, and to create a greater awareness of the shared responsibility we have to confront challenges and advocate for systemic changes to systemic problems. As such, deepening our knowledge and awareness of that identity will enable us to be better advocates of the university within the CU system and within state government entities that provide resources to CU Denver. Equity, diversity and inclusion should be viewed as an opportunity to value our people and further invest in them. The diffusion of EDI principles must be university-wide and transcend the academic and unit silos. We must prioritize proactive EDI norms rather than reactive norms while infusing our decision-making processes with objective assessments of data and re-evaluate success metrics to ensure that they do not further any forms of bias. We must be open to feedback and learning—as individuals and as an institution—and be willing to reframe and adjust accordingly.

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# Goal | 1

## Redefine Success

CU Denver's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) prioritizes, informs, and incentivizes the evaluation and definition of student, faculty, and staff success. By empowering our inclusive excellence, we unlock the potential for everyone to succeed.

### Strategy 1-1:

Define and Boldly Communicate our Commitment to EDI

#### Initiatives:

- Build a shared understanding of EDI and normalize the language of EDI within the institution
  - Identify bold, courageous, and attainable EDI goals and invest in continuous learning and improvement to accomplish and sustain these goals
  - Develop and regularly update an EDI goals and accomplishments dashboard that keeps members of the CU Denver community aware of the University's progress
  - Equip and provide resources to CU Denver EDI work through adequate permanent budget allocation, fundraising, and knowledge-sharing structures
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### Strategy 1-2:

Create & Fund an Institutional Equity Advocacy Council

#### Initiatives:

- Fund and staff an Institutional Equity Advocacy Council as an ongoing Equity Task Force to ensure efficacy, success, and sustainability of EDI initiatives and goals. Include CU Denver staff, faculty, and students and empower them to ensure timely University response to EDI-related challenges across campus
  - Leverage the team to lead the University in accomplishing EDI goals and support the CU Denver community in achieving inclusive excellence
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### Strategy 1-3:

Redefine CU Denver's Educational Experience to Infuse EDI Throughout Curriculum & Student Life

#### Initiatives:

- Conduct a full, formal review of the entire core curriculum that includes construction of new knowledge area(s) well-aligned to CU Denver's EDI goals
- Redesign curriculum to decenter whiteness and other sources of oppression, and communicate graduate and major curricula to represent EDI commitments
- Strengthen the Center for Identity and Inclusion with adequate resources, including increased funding and staff to be more responsive to student needs
- Redefine higher education at CU Denver by integrating instructional practices, professional learning, and institutional learning goals into our unique University identity

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# Goal | 1 (cont.)

## Redefine Success

CU Denver's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) prioritizes, informs, and incentivizes the evaluation and definition of student, faculty, and staff success. By empowering our inclusive excellence, we unlock the potential for everyone to succeed.

### Strategy 1-4:

Embed EDI in Recruiting, Hiring & Retention Policies & Practices

#### Initiatives:

- Develop innovative and/or alternative pathways for promotion and advancement
  - Identify, train, and resource current faculty and staff to serve as success coaches to support historically underrepresented faculty and staff; identify and hire success coaches for students
  - Set targets for diverse candidate pools and keep job openings active until filled
  - Reduce income gaps among faculty and staff by leveraging current and other pay equity legislation and through ongoing salary compression correction
  - Develop a plan to create a cluster hiring funding pool to incentivize schools, colleges, and business units to hire diverse faculty and staff
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### Strategy 1-5:

Recognize Faculty, Staff, and Students for Advancing EDI

#### Initiatives:

- Incorporate EDI performance goals into performance evaluations for faculty and staff
  - Recognize, support and award schools, colleges, business units, faculty, staff and students for advancing EDI goals by expanding current recognition programs and developing additional University-wide EDI recognitions and awards
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### Strategy 1-6:

Build EDI Culture by Investing in Formal & Informal Professional & Organizational Learning

#### Initiatives:

- Incorporate a significant EDI focus into onboarding new staff and faculty
- Offer existing faculty and staff training opportunities in EDI-based instruction and learning

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# Goal | 2

## Share Responsibility

CU Denver's faculty, staff, and students share the responsibility for creating and sustaining a just, safe, and inclusive campus, workplace, and community. Sharing this responsibility lessens the burdens of those harmed by social inequality, promotes a spirit of solidarity, and engages the entire community to ensure transformative justice.

### Strategy 2-1:

Ensure Sustained Physical, Technological & Financial Access

#### Initiatives:

- Leverage Auraria Higher Education Center to improve physical spaces and accessibility
- Strategize and secure funding to support student access
- Develop additional student work-study opportunities
- Maintain current fixed cost of tuition
- Restructure the linear tuition model
- Secure captioning system and translation strategy to ensure language access for deaf and hard-of-hearing faculty, staff, students, and speakers of various languages
- Provide technology resources for students demonstrating need or interest
- Lead the coordination of CU Denver's business and service units to ensure adaptive, responsive, and flexible practices to support ease of access for all students, faculty, and staff and ensure their success throughout their engagement at CU Denver

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### Strategy 2-2:

Courageously Practice Accountability to Those We Impact and Acknowledge the Role of Various Forms of Harm, including Displacement, Invalidation, Silencing, and Retaliation

#### Initiatives:

- Develop and employ a CU Denver land acknowledgement statement developed by members of Indigenous and Native American communities
- Develop and communicate clear pathways to resolve conflicts and disputes that negatively impact the successes of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students, staff, and faculty, as well as those with physical disabilities, neuro-diversities, and mental illnesses
- Broaden collective understandings of harm caused by CU Denver and support development of knowledge and practice to remedy, and ultimately eliminate, harms caused

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# Goal | 3

## Develop Systems

We develop, utilize, and continuously improve systems that value relationships, create community, and actively support and serve people of historically marginalized identities in order to reduce bias, create and sustain equity, and ensure broad and inclusive access to CU Denver.

### Strategy 3-1:

Diversify CU Denver Leadership

#### Initiatives:

- Emphasize and value EDI scholarship and experience in administrative and leadership position postings
- Qualify the importance of experience and wisdom in campus administrative and leadership position postings

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### Strategy 3-2:

Improve CU Denver Safety Practices

#### Initiatives:

- Collectively define physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual safety
- Partner with the Auraria Higher Education Center, Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and the Auraria Campus Police Department to invest in the development of human-centered safety strategies, including mental health training for campus safety officers and mental health professionals accompanying the Auraria Campus Police Department
- Develop annual campus-wide wellness and recovery events to encourage community-building, reconciliation, and social integration within and across various CU Denver communities
- Broaden the CU Denver criteria beyond law-qualifying wrongdoing and injustice

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# Equity Roadmap and Funding Recommendations

Thanks to the CU Foundation and President Mark Kennedy, CU Denver received \$1 million in one-time funds to support DEI efforts. Chancellor Marks asked the Equity Task Force for their funding recommendations. The near-term timeline below lists initiatives in chronological order and the associated Task Force funding recommendations. The first year estimated investment is approximately \$282,000; the three year total is \$776,000. Funding after the first year is subject to annual review. The remaining undesignated funds of \$224,000 will be recommended by the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Institutional Equity Advocacy Council as they partner to execute on strategy.

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## **April 15, 2021+**

Define and Boldly Communicate our Commitment to EDI

## **Spring 2021**

Diversify CU Denver Leadership

## **Start Fall 2021**

Create & Fund an Institutional Equity Advocacy Council

Fund: \$300,000 FY 21/22 – FY23/24

## **Start Fall 2021**

Design Strategy to redefine CU Denver's Educational Experience to Infuse EDI Throughout Curriculum & Student Life

## **Fall 2021 Design; Spring 2022 Launch**

Recognize Faculty, Staff & Students for Advancing EDI

Fund \$51,000 FY 21/22 – FY23/24

## **Start Fall 2021**

Build EDI Culture by Investing in Formal & Informal Professional & Organizational Learning  
CU Denver Leadership will be trained first through other resources

Fund \$80,000 FY 21/22 – FY 23/24

## **Start Fall 2021**

Courageously Practice Accountability to Those We Impact & Acknowledge the Role of Various Forms of Harm

Funding: \$150,000 FY 21/22 – FY 23/24

## **Start Fall 2021**

Design Improvements for CU Denver Safety Practices

Funding: TBD

## **Start Fall 2021**

Ensure Sustained Physical, Technological & Financial Access

Fund \$55,000 FY 21/22 – FY 23/24

## **Spring 2022 Design; Fall 2022 Launch**

Embed EDI in Recruiting, Hiring & Retention Policies & Practices

Fund \$140,000 FY 21/22 – FY 23/24

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# Equity Roadmap by Year

## Year 1: Starting Spring & Summer 2021

1. **APRIL 2021 & ONGOING:** Build a shared understanding of EDI and normalize the language of EDI within the institution (S 1-1)
2. **APRIL 2021 & ONGOING:** Identify bold, courageous, and attainable EDI goals and invest in continuous learning and improvement to accomplish and sustain these goals (S 1-1)
3. **SPRING 2021 NEEDSASSESSMENT:** Leverage AHEC to improve physical spaces and accessibility (S 2-1)
4. **SPRING 2021 DESIGN:** Develop plan to create a cluster hiring funding pool to incentivize schools, colleges, and business units to hire diverse faculty and staff (fund training on Cluster Hiring at school/college/unit level) (S 1-4)
5. **SUMMER 2021:** Collectively define physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual safety (S 3-2)
6. **SUMMER 2021:** Secure captioning system and translation strategy to ensure language access for deaf and hard-of-hearing faculty, staff, students, and speakers of various languages (S 2-1)
7. **SUMMER 2021 & ONGOING:** Emphasize and value EDI scholarship and experience in administrative and leadership position postings (S 3-1)
8. **SUMMER 2021 & ONGOING:** Coordinate CU Denver's business and service units to ensure adaptive, responsive, and flexible practices to support accessibility for all students, faculty, and staff and ensuring their success throughout their engagement at CU Denver.(S 1-6)
9. **JULY 2021:** Fund and staff an Institutional Equity Advocacy Council as an ongoing Equity Task Force to ensure efficacy, success, and sustainability of EDI initiatives and goals. Include CU Denver staff, faculty, and students and empower them to ensure timely University response to EDI-related challenges across campus (S 1-2)
10. **FALL 2021/SPRING 2022 ON-CAMPUS:** Broaden collective understandings of harm caused by CU Denver and support development of knowledge and practice to remedy, and ultimately eliminate, harms caused (S 2-2)

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# Equity Roadmap by Year

## Year 2: Starting Spring & Summer 2022

1. **SPRING 2022:** Develop and communicate clear pathways to resolve conflicts and disputes that negatively impact the successes of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students, staff, and faculty, as well as those with physical disabilities, neuro-diversities, and mental illnesses (S 2-2)
2. **SPRING 2022 START, FALL 2022 LAUNCH:** Partner with AHEC, CCD, MSUD, and AHEC PD to invest in the development of human-centered safety strategies, including mental health training for campus safety officers and mental health professionals accompanying Auraria PD (S 3-2)
3. **SPRING 2022 & ONGOING:** Redesign curriculum to decenter whiteness and other sources of oppression, and communicate graduate and major curricula to represent EDI commitments (S 1-3)
4. **SPRING 2022 & ONGOING:** Redefine higher education at CU Denver by integrating instructional practices, professional learning, and institutional learning goals into our unique university identity (S 1-3)
5. **SPRING 2022 START, SPRING 2024 COMPLETION:** Conduct a full, formal review of the entire core curriculum that includes construction of new knowledge area(s) well-aligned to CU Denver's EDI goals (S 1-3)

## Year 2: Starting Fall 2022

1. **FALL 2022:** Incorporate EDI performance goals into performance evaluations for faculty and staff (S 1-5)
2. **FALL 2022:** Restructure the linear tuition model (S 2-1)
3. **FALL 2022:** Broaden the CU Denver criteria beyond law-qualifying wrongdoing and injustice (S 3-2)
4. **FALL 2022 PHYSICAL ACCESS IMPROVEMENT:** Leverage AHEC to improve physical spaces and accessibility (S 2-1)
5. **FALL 2022 DESIGN, SPRING 2023 LAUNCH:** Develop innovative and/or alternative pathways for promotion and advancement (S 1-4)
6. **FALL 2022 DESIGN, FALL 2023 LAUNCH:** Develop annual campus-wide wellness and recovery events to encourage community-building, reconciliation, and social integration within and across various CU Denver communities (S 3-2)
7. **FALL 2022/SPRING 2023 OFF-CAMPUS:** Broaden collective understandings of harm caused by CU Denver and support development of knowledge and practice to remedy, and ultimately eliminate, harms caused (S 2-2)

## Year 3: Starting Spring, Summer & Fall 2023

1. **FALL 2023:** Develop additional student work-study opportunities (S 2-1)
2. **FALL 2023 LAUNCH:** Develop plan to create a cluster hiring funding pool to incentivize schools, colleges, and business units to hire diverse faculty and staff (fund training on Cluster Hiring at school/college/unit level) (S 1-4)