

**State of the Campus Address, by Chancellor Dorothy Horrell**

November 15, 2018

Good afternoon and welcome! Thank you for joining us for CU Denver's annual State of the Campus address. It's especially meaningful to be holding this event in the Lola & Rob Salazar Student Wellness Center.

The opening of this facility was one of the highlights of the past year. We know that supporting healthy lifestyles and the emotional and social wellbeing of our students is essential to a high-quality educational experience. It is truly a wonderful addition to our campus.

Just prior to its official opening, I had a chance to tour the Center with my daughter and 6-year-old granddaughter who were visiting from San Antonio. Upon seeing the climbing wall, Ailie was ready to scale it. Amber Long appropriately let her know that she'd have to wait until she was a bit older. Ailie's other favorite feature was the hot tub. Since then, she's eagerly shared with her first-grade classmates that because it holds 18 people, all of them could be in it together.

While we're not currently enjoying the ambiance of a hot tub, I am glad that we're all together today. The State of the Campus address gives us the opportunity to reflect on our collective achievements, do a "check-up" on our progress, and look to the future.

In setting a context for my remarks, the adage of living in interesting times is certainly apropos. A number of juxtapositions come to mind:

- The Colorado Front Range is experiencing growth that has brought tremendous opportunity, a robust and diversified economy, and an unemployment rate that is among the lowest in the nation.
- However, that growth has amplified economic disparity, lack of affordable housing, traffic congestion, environmental concerns and unequal access to education and healthcare.
- National surveys tell us that most Americans see value in higher education—but 6 in 10 believe higher education is generally going in the wrong direction.
- Closer to home, nearly three-quarters of the jobs being created in Colorado require education beyond high school. But, less than a third of our city's adults who were born in Colorado have a college degree, and that statistic is even lower for people of color. This is especially concerning given that children of color make up a growing portion of our state's K-12 students.

I would submit that there has never been a more important time for CU Denver.

It is very clear that as Colorado's public urban research university, CU Denver fills a singular niche in contributing to the economic, social and cultural vitality of our metropolitan region, our state, and beyond.

It's for that reason that I often say the work we do at CU Denver is a precious opportunity and a profound obligation. And, almost three years into this job, I feel more passionately about that than ever.

College is a bridge to opportunity. With a student body that largely represents the socioeconomic and ethnically diverse demographics of our community, we are in the noble position to move the needle on two critical imperatives:

1. Closing the attainment gap – the disparity in academic outcomes between groups of students based on ethnicity and income level
2. Developing the professional workforce of the future — graduating students with the creativity, initiative and knowledge to be change agents and decision-makers in their jobs and in the community.

In 2016, we established 5 strategic priorities. In addition to coalescing our collective work, these priorities are an expression of our values – the things we care about and hold ourselves accountable for.

I'd like to provide an update on the considerable progress we've made on these over the last year and how this shapes our work going forward. As I review each one, I ask you to reflect on your part in our success and what more is possible in the future.

### **1. Elevate student success through increased enrollment, retention and graduation**

We welcomed 15,232 students to our campus this fall, a new record enrollment mark. This includes 3000 new undergraduate Lynx – about evenly divided between first-year, first-time students and transfer students – and 900 new graduate students. Overall, our student body grew by 1.5%.

Our student body continues to reflect our community.

- 57% of our new first-time, first-year students are students of color
- 50% of our first-time undergraduates are first-generation
- 47% of our undergraduates are students of color
- 34% are underrepresented minority
- 46% of our Colorado undergraduate students are Pell recipients

Our highest priority is to help every single one of our students succeed. We have established goals and are measuring our progress on persistence and graduation rates.

First-year to second-year persistence: 75% goal; current status: 67%

6-year graduation goal: 60%; current status: 45%

3-year graduation goal for transfer students: 75%; current status: 55%

To achieve these goals requires that all of us have an unrelenting focus on our students and their needs—plus, and perhaps even more critically— genuine concern for student outcomes and the courage to try new approaches.

This fall, we reorganized our student affairs functions into two areas: one focused on Student Access and Achievement – with a team organized to support student academic achievement from first contact to graduation – and the other on Student Development – to support students in their personal, social, and leadership development. Both areas are tasked with working collaboratively for the benefit of our students.

The Student Access and Achievement area is focused on creating and delivering an unparalleled student experience. To accomplish that, they are:

- Redesigning the student experience, providing greater support and coordination for students as they navigate important but sometimes confusing systems.
- Blending specialized technology with the best-of-human interaction, using predictive analytics to analyze student needs and to provide targeted interventions and proactive, strategic care.
- Strengthening pathways to graduation, refining degree maps to make it easier for students to clearly see what courses they need and when.
- Working on creating even closer collaboration among all the advising units to provide a more consistent experience for students.
- Putting systems in place for earlier student engagement, from First Year Experience to Career Services, so that they can have more direction.

- Focusing on undecided students, helping them explore their interests around clusters of careers or meta-majors.
- Looking at the spaces in the Student Commons, and considering how we might achieve a more approachable layout for students to access services.

The Student Development team is focused on two key initiatives:

1. They are planning for a first-year housing and dining facility located right in the heart of the CU Denver neighborhood. This was identified as a top priority in our Facilities Master Plan. To help fund this project, we're in the process of selecting a private partner to operate Campus Village and develop the adjacent vacant land. Our goal is to offer a competitively-priced on-campus living and learning option.
2. We know that health status impacts students' ability to engage, learn, and succeed. Surveys tell us that college students across the country are experiencing high rates of depression and anxiety. On our campus, the Office of Case Management/CARE Team reports that referrals are up 44% compared to this time last year, and are up 241% compared to fall 2015. To better address these needs, we are developing a strategic plan for mental wellness. This will incorporate best practices that emphasize prevention, support a sense of belonging, and enhance a culture of wellness.

## **2. Advance excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and creative work**

We know that great teaching is at the heart of student success and that being educated by "knowledge creators" distinguishes the learning experience for our students.

I want to call out three initiatives that underscore our commitment to excellence in teaching:

- 1) This year, the Center for Faculty Development selected faculty members to participate in the Association of College and University Educators on-line course that prepares them to use research-based techniques that help students succeed.
- 2) The theme of our recent Undergraduate Experiences Symposium was "Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century." The day included faculty presentations on topics such as community-based learning, inclusive pedagogy, undergraduate research and creative activities, and peer-based learning.
- 3) ThingStudio is a faculty-created initiative that is becoming known nationally in the digital pedagogy networks. Through innovation and experimentation, faculty across disciplines are

working to enhance teaching and learning. Now connected to the Office of Digital Education, ThingStudio serves as an incubator for future-ready teaching.

Speaking of digital education, exciting work is underway to develop a \$15,000 on-line undergraduate degree. This is in response to the Board of Regents resolution directed at increasing access and affordability. We are also developing additional on-line courses that will be available through concurrent enrollment for Colorado high school students.

To better serve the educational needs of the working adult population, we are taking advantage of the synergies between CU South Denver and our Office of Digital Education through shared leadership. South Denver has honed their strategic focus on executive education and professional development. And the Office of Digital Education is collaborating with our schools and colleges to expand the availability of fully on-line and blended degree and certificate programs.

In partnership with the Anschutz Medical Campus, we are actively exploring innovative health-related programs with a focus on interdisciplinary, market-driven, and collaborative initiatives that leverage the academic expertise of both campuses. And, this fall we are creating Health and Wellness Clusters – interdisciplinary majors that prepare students for health and health-related careers.

In our crowded educational marketplace, one of our most important differentiators is our role as an urban research university. This last year, our faculty brought in over \$25 million dollars of sponsored research, in addition to numerous grants and contracts with area businesses and governmental agencies. Also, creative works ranging from plays, books on a variety of topics and award-winning documentaries were produced by our faculty.

This spring we'll be starting a new tradition to celebrate scholarly achievements. Thanks to Drs. Bob and Lennie Damrauer, in addition to a Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture by a renowned visiting scholar, we are adding a Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture presented by one of our own CU Denver faculty members.

Here is a sampling of the remarkable and relevant scholarly work that is taking place in our schools and colleges:

Our policy experts at our [School of Public Affairs](#) are regularly sought after for thought leadership on issues of national and global significance. And year after year, SPA is ranked as THE top public affairs school in Colorado, and among the best in the nation.

The School of Education and Human Development won a prestigious national best practice award for promoting diversity in teacher education. They were honored for their work to develop career pathways that address the state's severe teacher shortage and turnover issue.

The College of Arts & Media has developed a reputation for having some of the best high school summer arts camps in America. Featuring contemporary music, film and visual arts, the camps are an important recruitment pipeline that most recently included participants from 23 states and 3 countries.

In the College of Architecture and Planning, students designed and built an award-winning community space for Colorado Outward Bound in Moab, Utah. The Urban and Regional Planning Department is studying what equity means in areas including housing, health and transportation.

In the Business School, a \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education is funding Colorado's only Center for International Business Education and Research. Their focus is to prepare current and future practitioners to conduct business in a digital, disrupted, and dynamic global environment.

In the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, a team of CU Denver electrical engineering faculty along with Boulder colleagues have received a \$4.5 million federal grant to design drones to improve the safety and environmental sustainability of underground facilities like subway tunnels, mines and caves.

In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the breadth of scholarly activities is as wide-ranging as are the disciplines within that college. They include improving wireless emergency alerts, getting a clearer understanding of public opinion on allocating limited health care resources, exploring boundaries of migration research, and promoting success in undergraduate mathematics through graduate teacher training.

High quality facilities are essential to support excellence in teaching and scholarly activities. Over \$40 million has been invested to make improvements in the North Classroom Building. This includes the renovation of 30 classrooms, new recitation and group study rooms, wireless connectivity in all classrooms and upgrading the bathrooms. This project is scheduled to be completed next spring.

A little further up Speer Boulevard, we are making plans to build a state-of-the-art facility for our engineering college. This project is ranked as the CU System's number one priority and

second among the state's new higher education projects. A program plan for the building is being developed that will match the college's ambitions to prepare engineers of the future. We're requesting half the \$72 million cost from the state and the other half will come from private gifts and university reserves.

Another construction project is the infill of the courtyard at the Business School. With funding from benefactor Jake Jabs along with an investment from the Business School, there will be event spaces, new classrooms and seminar rooms, conference rooms and offices. The new Jake Jabs Events Center is scheduled to be completed in spring 2020.

### **3. Strengthen our position as a vital community asset**

Two years ago, we reclaimed the tagline "CU in the City." This captures our aspiration to make CU Denver better known as an urban hub of knowledge, discovery and partnership. And it's working! Here are two highlights from a recent study that measured CU Denver's brand awareness in the market:

- Of Denver-metro residents, 52 percent would recommend CU Denver to a friend or family member – nearly double what it was four years ago.
- Denver-metro residents gave significantly higher image ratings of CU Denver than in the past in *all* areas measured, including academic quality, groundbreaking research and experiential-learning opportunities.

In October, we opened CityCenter at CU Denver at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Lawrence. This is our front door to the community. It's the place where we are connecting the expertise of our faculty and the ingenuity of our students to the region's governmental, business and nonprofit sectors, helping to find new solutions to challenging urban issues.

We are creating an inventory of our expertise in such areas as affordable housing, transportation alternatives, health disparities, educational inequities, sustainable development, and the impact of arts and culture.

The inaugural undertaking for CityCenter, *Imagine a Great Region*, will foster cross-sector, regional conversations on growth while conducting research to inform these conversations. The Gates Family Foundation has provided a planning grant and other partners include the Denver Regional Council of Governments and Channel 7 News.

With the support of TIAA, we'll soon be selecting seven faculty—one from each of our schools and colleges—to serve as Chancellor's Engaged Scholars. They will receive a stipend and their work on urban issues will be highlighted.

#### **4. Create a more cohesive, collaborative and inclusive CU Denver culture**

If we've learned anything from recent events in our country and around the world, it's that our commitment to creating and maintaining an environment that is welcoming, safe and inclusive for everyone is more important than ever.

CU Denver must always be a place where diverse ideas and viewpoints are analyzed, debated and discussed with respect and civility. It's a place where faculty freely conduct research and teach truth within the standards of their disciplines. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are fundamental to the existence of higher education and our contributions to society. As President Benson often says: "Our job is not to teach our students what to think, but rather how to think."

When people ask me why I weigh in on issues such as DACA, hate crimes, or actions that attempt to divide us based on our differences, I tell them the truth. These issues are not political to me — these are matters that affect real people, including members of our CU Denver family. I believe the strength of CU Denver is rooted in our respect and compassion for one another.

An example is our new #youarewelcomehere campaign that reaches out to international students in multiple ways — from the Denver Mayor's Welcome, the Connect2Campus event, and the popular CU at the Table program. We have maintained our international student enrollment in no small part because of the welcoming environment we provide to those studying here from other countries.

When divisive issues do arise, we take action. Following concerns about the potential location of Ink! Coffee in this Wellness Center, we established the Auraria Task Force on Gentrification and Urban Displacement. This tri-institutional group consisting of students, faculty, and staff is reviewing policies and practices to acknowledge and address the Auraria Campus's role in gentrification and urban displacement. The task force will offer recommendations to campus leadership by next July for how to be more proactive and responsive.



A few weeks back, we held the first Chancellor's Diversity Showcase, coordinated by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. It was a wonderful gathering, with 44 exhibits by groups ranging from Undocumented Student Services to Disability Services and Resources. The displays illustrated CU Denver's comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion and provided an opportunity for all of us to learn more about how we can engage.

And finally, CU Denver is proud to serve over 1,000 military-connected students. We thank them for their service. Our Office of Veteran's Services was recently ranked #8 by *Military Times* for Colleges Best in the Country for Vets. This is up from #11 last year.

## **5. Achieve long-term financial stability and sustainability**

Of course, none of these priorities is achievable without financial stability. Starting with our current fiscal year, we implemented an incentive-based budget model. It aligns our investments and resources with our strategic priorities by incentivizing the types of activities that drive both student and financial success. This is especially important given the reality that 80% of our budget comes from tuition and fees. In addition, the new model increases transparency so that everyone understands how the budget works and their role in ensuring our financial sustainability.

Our planning and budgeting process now includes a forum for schools, colleges, and central support units to discuss strategies and work together to achieve our priorities. And it provides incentives – and authority – to our schools and colleges to grow revenue, contain costs, and reallocate resources within their budgets, putting them in control of their own long-term success. This, in turn, propels the long-term success of CU Denver.

Going forward, we know that philanthropy will play an even more important role. Last year, we raised a record \$20.8 million in private gifts. And here's a pride point for all of us: Since January of 2017, our faculty and staff have collectively contributed \$1 million to the LYNX UP scholarship initiative. It is true that philanthropy begins at home...and, in our case, right here on our campus!

We're making preparations for the system-wide Essential CU fundraising campaign that will launch in January. This coincides with the conclusion of the remarkably impactful 11-year tenure of President Bruce Benson. The legacy he and his wife, Marcy, have created has served the university incredibly well. He has been a great friend to CU Denver and we will miss him. As the presidential transition takes place, you can be assured that we'll continue advocating for the unique role and contributions of CU Denver.

We have accomplished a great deal and much more is in the works. In fact, some may say we are over-reaching. There may be something to that, but I believe we are at a pivotal time in the life of CU Denver. In fact, I believe we are poised to move from “good to great.”

The thing we know about high-performing organizations is that there is no silver bullet or revolutionary innovation that’s behind their success. Rather, they have clarity and intentionality about their goals, and focus and discipline around their execution. They are bolstered by a sense of shared responsibility and a culture of trust.

That’s an aspiration I hope we all share. We are a complex organization. We are very good at a lot of things, and there is always room for improvement. We must learn from our failures and our successes, and be able to face the “hard truths” when they arise.

I want you to know that when there are problems or issues, we have a leadership team that takes them seriously. Just as we want our students to feel listened to, valued, and respected, that is what we can and should expect of each other.

Recently our campus leadership – the cabinet and deans – spent an afternoon defining the components that power CU Denver. We drew upon the work of Jim Collins, an author and advisor to business and social sector leaders. One of his tools is the concept of a flywheel, a heavy revolving wheel in a machine that is used to increase the machine's momentum and provide greater stability.

Collins developed “the flywheel effect” to describe what happens when an organization identifies the primary components of their flywheel, understands how they best link together, and turn by turn, builds momentum and achieves strategic compounding that leads to long-term success.

As we considered what we know and believe about the essence of CU Denver, we identified these essential elements:

We first **invest in top-notch faculty, staff and facilities**, through which we **cultivate a student-centered, collaborative, inclusive culture**. This enables us to deliver **exceptional teaching, research and service**. As a result, we **attract and graduate purposeful, high potential diverse students**. They in turn **fuel the region’s economic, social, and cultural prosperity**. That allows us to **grow a multifaceted resource base**, which brings us right back to the top of the loop where we invest more in our people and our infrastructure.

Our flywheel isn't static. Rather it means evolving, expanding and extending our capacity to innovate aggressively at each step along the way to build and accelerate our momentum. I ask each of you to consider:

- ✓ Where on the flywheel do you join with others so that together, we gain even more traction?
- ✓ What are your ideas to help us create and sustain good-to-great breakthroughs at steps along the way?

This is an exhilarating journey, one that allows us to move our flywheel even more powerfully, and lifts our individual efforts into collective unstoppable strength. In my mind, this calls on the best in each of us, and is truly work worth doing.

A few weeks back, we hosted our first donor celebration for CU Denver. My closing remarks to them seem fitting to share with you.

I like this quote by Henry David Thoreau: **It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.**

And because of you, we see a future that is ripe with promise and potential.

We see a future where every student with the capability and the desire to earn a CU Denver degree can do so without a financial barrier.

We see a future where because of our quality academics and deep community connections, CU Denver is recognized as the knowledge partner and talent provider of choice in the region.

We see a future where our students are sought after as thought leaders and difference makers in our community and beyond.

We see a future in which CU Denver is widely regarded as one of our city's indisputable assets.

Our aim is clear, and like our students, the trajectory for CU Denver is set high.

It is my honor to be your chancellor. I am grateful for and humbled by all you do every day for our university and the students we serve. None of what we've accomplished would be possible without you. Your commitment to our mission, your energy and your dedication, are central to our achievements, and they hold the promise of an even brighter future for CU Denver.