



A Message from Provost Marrongelle

Dear Colleagues,

Since joining CU Denver as provost this August, I have been deeply impressed by the work of our faculty across the university. Lecturers, instructors, research, and clinical faculty play an enormous role in enabling that success, accounting for over 60% of our faculty and classroom teaching hours. So I want to start by thanking you for choosing CU Denver as a place to deploy your expertise and experience, on behalf of the students and communities we serve.



I've been encouraged to see efforts across CU Denver these past several years to increase belonging, respect, and working conditions for IRC faculty. I have reviewed [IRC Task Force recommendations](#) and the Provost's Roadmap outlining our implementation progress. I'm grateful for the work of the Task Force and its partnership with Faculty Affairs AVC Turan Kayaoglu to keep these priorities at the forefront.

To ensure we maintain a positive trajectory, UCDALI President Beth Pugliano and I have charged a new IRC Progress Assessment Committee (see roster [on this page](#)) to learn whether changes we've

implemented are working and, if not, what we should do from here. I appreciate that there is more to be done long-term on faculty pay: as campuswide efforts to increase our retention and enrollment take root, we can increase our budgetary sustainability and better support recommendations regarding recognition and compensation.

These are challenging times across higher education, and I understand anxieties on the minds of educators right now about academic freedom, shifting disciplinary and research priorities, and whether public officials and emerging professionals recognize that colleges and universities are essential contributors to a flourishing society. I know these anxieties can be especially acute for IRC faculty who may feel they lack the security to express themselves as they have reason and right to. We began to discuss these important issues at my You Belong Here! symposium session and identified some processes and mechanisms that could help IRC faculty. I want to pick up this conversation and continue to work on this important issue.

While some uncertainties are beyond our ability to resolve on our own, many are not. Just as CU Denver's public service responsibility compels us to recognize and uplift every student, it also drives us to recognize and improve circumstances for all faculty, especially IRC faculty. How this may look, as we adapt to fast-changing conditions, may evolve over time, but I want you to know I am your ally as we continue this work together.

I encourage you to reach out to me with questions or concerns at provost@ucdenver.edu, and if you see me in your work on or beyond campus, I hope you will stop and say hi. Thank you again for bringing your talents, passions, and ideas to CU Denver.

Sincerely,

Karen Marrongelle

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Özge Heinz

Curiosity, creativity, and connection define Dr. Özge Heinz's approach to materials science—and to life.



This month, we spoke with **Dr. Özge Heinz**, lecturer in **Materials Science and Engineering**, who teaches both lecture and laboratory courses on the properties of materials. Outside the classroom, Dr. Heinz serves as an editor for the *Perspectives* series at **ACS Langmuir**, where she helps shape conversations at the forefront of surface and interface science.

What first drew you to materials science, and how have teaching and editorial work shaped your perspective?

I completed my undergraduate and master's degrees in chemical engineering, focusing on developing materials for sustained drug delivery systems. Working with natural polymers like silk fibroin and hyaluronic acid taught me how deeply a material's performance depends on its molecular organization, from chain structure to surface interactions.

Over time, my curiosity grew beyond biomedical materials. For my Ph.D., I moved into **Materials Science and Engineering**, where I could explore structure–property relationships across many systems. I wanted to understand *why* materials behave the way they do, how they adapt, interact, and respond in contexts from energy storage to sensing.

Teaching has added another dimension to that curiosity. Guiding students through experiments and discussions constantly makes me revisit first principles and see the field anew. Their questions often remind me that curiosity drives understanding.

My editorial work at *ACS Langmuir* complements that by offering a panoramic view of emerging research and the creative ways scientists are solving surface and interface challenges. Together, these roles remind me that materials aren't static objects; they're dynamic systems shaped by structure, environment, and imagination.

You're originally from Turkey—what brought you to the U.S., and how has that journey shaped your career?

It's not the most academic story! During my Ph.D. in Istanbul, I attended a workshop in Bangalore, India, where I met another materials scientist. We married in Germany and started our family in the U.S. Having a child while finishing my thesis, far from family, was both challenging and joyful. I

defended my dissertation when my son was a year old, and I'll never forget seeing him in my advisor's arms at the celebration.

I later joined **CU Boulder** as a postdoctoral researcher in the Nanomaterials Lab, working on reverse-osmosis membranes. My postdoc ended just as the COVID-19 pandemic began, making it difficult to balance research and family. I focused on writing and reviewing papers and began collaborating with *ACS Langmuir*. Under Editor-in-Chief Gilbert Walker, we launched the *Perspectives* series, now in its fourth year. Today, I continue as both a handling editor and *Perspectives* editor, highlighting creative intersections in surface and interface science.

How does hands-on experimentation enhance students' understanding of materials behavior?

I have the privilege of teaching both **Introduction to Materials Science** and the accompanying lab, **Properties of Engineering Materials**. This overlap allows me to connect theory directly to practice, helping students see how structure, processing, and properties link together. In the lab, they measure hardness, analyze tensile and bending strength, and work in teams on design projects with written reports and presentations.

These hands-on experiences give students a tangible connection to theory. They realize that materials science isn't just about equations; it's about observing, analyzing, and creating. Watching those "aha" moments when concepts become real is one of the most rewarding parts of teaching.

What advice would you give to students and early-career researchers on building technical and communication skills?

Strong communication is as essential as technical mastery. As AI becomes more integrated into research, the *human* elements—clarity, empathy, intuition—are more valuable than ever. Technology can assist with data or drafting, but it can't replace understanding or the ability to explain complex ideas clearly.

I encourage students to describe their work as if speaking to someone outside their field. Doing so sharpens their thinking and reveals the essence of their ideas. In my classes, students give short, high-impact presentations explaining an engineering problem. These exercises build confidence, deepen understanding, and prepare them for dynamic communication.

AI tools are most effective when guided by skilled users. With a solid foundation and thoughtful questions, they become powerful tools for discovery. The future will favor those who pair strong expertise with clear and creative communication.

How do you maintain balance between professional life and personal time?

Boulder quickly became a second home for me, offering a perfect mix of nature and community. I love tennis, hiking, and sharing long dinners with friends. At home, cooking and baking with my son, our “Chef in Residence”, is pure joy. We also love building Legos together; searching for the right piece always leads to the best conversations.

Travel is another passion, especially returning to my first home on the west coast of Turkey to visit family. Those moments of reconnection and reflection bring balance, perspective, and energy that sustain me in my teaching, editorial work, and everyday life.



IRC “Contingent Faculty” in the Research...

Earnshaw, Y., & Bodine Al-Sharif, M. A. (2025). “It’s a situationship: How online contingent faculty talk about their needed support.” *Online Learning*, 29(2), 95-117.

“Our findings resulted in four overarching themes: our participants are off the radar and not included, their contingent role is a perceived gateway, their role is one of convenience for both the contingent faculty and the institution, and there is an imbalance of power between our participants and their institutions.” [Read more here!](#)

IRC “Contingent Faculty” in the News...

Truthout “Why I’m Leaving Academia after a Decade of Contingent Labor.” by Francis Cannon. Monday, October 4, 2025.

“Roughly 70 percent of faculty are contingent. This exploitative hustle is driving dedicated teachers out of academia.” [Read more here!](#)

📌 Announcements 📌



CFDA IRC Faculty Grant Reviewers Wanted

The Center for Faculty Development and Advancement (CFDA) is seeking faculty members to serve as reviewers on internal grant applications. Faculty participation is vital to ensuring a fair and thorough evaluation process that supports our academic community.

The next round of grants will be in Spring 2026, although anyone interested and willing to be part of a reviewer pool for future application cycles is encouraged to respond. If you are interested, please email cfda@ucdenver.edu with your name and faculty rank.

Thank you so much for considering this important service opportunity! Your expertise and time are greatly appreciated!



UCDALI Coffee and Community Events

Throughout the year, UCDALI hosts drop-in events for IRC faculty to connect with each other and with UCDALI leadership (and enjoy some refreshments to boot!). Some gatherings are casual opportunities to share some food and conversation, while others will center around a topic of potential interest to IRC faculty.

Please watch your email for dates and additional info, and reach out to ucdali@ucdenver.edu or elizabeth.pugliano@ucdenver.edu with any topic requests.

Join UCDALI

[UCDALI](#) endeavors to support the working conditions, professional development, recognition and community connections of all Lecturers, Instructors, Research and Clinical faculty at CU Denver. We work in parallel with the Faculty Assembly, and shared governance in the school and colleges, to identify and address IRC faculty concerns, questions and challenges. We would love to hear from you! Reach out at ucdali@ucdenver.edu.

Feedback Request

We Want to Hear From You!

Your feedback helps us make our UCDALI emails, newsletters, and website more useful and relevant to you. By sharing your thoughts, you'll help us deliver the information you care about most. This quick survey will take just a few minutes, and your input will make a big difference. Thank you for sharing your thoughts!

[**UCDALI Communications Feedback – Form**](#)



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