



University of Colorado **Denver**

2030 STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH



In January 2021, CU Denver embarked on a strategic planning process with the ambitious goal to reposition CU Denver as a public urban research university that supports learners from all backgrounds and at all stages of life. The result was [CU Denver 2030: Make Education Work for All](#).

Since then, the global economy has transformed significantly—and continues to evolve rapidly. Higher education has changed immensely, too. To meet this new moment, Chancellor Kenneth T. Christensen, PhD, called on CU Denver's deep well of ingenuity and expertise to reenvision the university's strategic plan, launching a strategic plan feedback process that ran from September through December 2025. During those four months, more than 1,000 pieces of feedback were collected across more than 50 university-wide and unit-level gatherings.

In [February 2026](#), the 2030 Strategic Plan Refresh was formalized with the unveiling of the four core principles that emerged from that process: Learner Success, Discovery and Impact, Organizational Excellence and Innovation, and Belonging and Meaningful Work.

Using the term refresh is intentional. While the 2030 Strategic Plan Refresh is structured differently, it preserves the foundational design that has guided CU Denver for the past five years. Looking forward to 2030, CU Denver will continue to uphold its public service obligation for its learners, the communities it serves, and all Coloradans.



Our purpose, vision, values, and core principles define who we are and who we aspire to become as Colorado's only public urban research university. Our purpose anchors our work. Our vision motivates us to remain future-focused. Our values shape how we show up for one another and the communities we serve. Our core principles outline what we will do to achieve success.

OUR PURPOSE

Grounded in our commitment to public service, we demonstrate the lasting power of a CU Denver education by uplifting the students we are entrusted to educate and the communities we serve, advancing our shared future together.

OUR VISION

As the Denver metro area's anchor higher education partner, we believe every learner deserves an equal opportunity to persist, graduate, and excel in their lives and careers. With their success comes greater opportunity for all of us to collectively advance our shared goals and ambitions.

OUR VALUES

Service-driven: We are committed to our public service obligation, driven by meaningful outcomes, and dedicated to advancing the public good through transparent engagement with the communities we serve.

People-centered: In service of our learners and employees, we embody a culture of respect, prioritizing access and equity to maximize our impact through collaboration and creativity.

Adaptable: We rise to the challenges and opportunities ahead with curiosity, purpose, and a willingness to grow. We work together to push the bounds of knowledge and discovery with intention, anticipating change as we work to reach our thriving state.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

CU Denver will fulfill its responsibility as the Denver metro area's anchor higher education partner by making education work for all. To achieve this, we will...

LEARNER SUCCESS

*Make education work for all through access, equity, opportunity,
and meaningful outcomes.*

CU Denver provides career-aligned learning experiences that maximize learner potential from high school to retirement. As a primary educator of Denver metro area professionals, we will increase affordability and access to equip our region's workforce for excellence. We welcome all and meet learners where they are, providing opportunities to uplift everyone who entrusts us with their dreams, whether through the transformative power of a traditional degree, or through career advancement fueled by a certificate or other credential. Our success will be measured by the outcomes that matter most: how well our learners persist, graduate, and thrive in their careers.



DISCOVERY AND IMPACT

Prioritize discovery and innovation through research and creative works that address community needs and contribute to the public good.

Our ideas and entrepreneurial spirit combine with our vibrant, inquiry-driven academic culture to generate new knowledge, spark positive change, and instill in learners a sense of wonder and purpose. As a public urban research university, we must ensure that our discovery and innovation efforts serve the public good, empower our faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students to engage in meaningful research, and have impact in clear and measurable ways—seen and felt by residents, industry partners, and civic leaders—across and beyond the Denver metro area.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Cultivate a campuswide innovation ecosystem that enhances our excellence, efficiency, resiliency, and ability to achieve goals in support of our students and employees.

We will continue to innovate and evolve how we educate and support our learners, and how we operate as a university. By maximizing the effectiveness of academic and administrative processes, systems, and services our learners and employees depend on, we can better adapt to changing conditions and create efficient approaches that support the success of our people. We will invest in opportunities that will yield the greatest impact and collaborate in seamless and integrated ways to help learners, faculty, and staff access resources and find solutions. By empowering our employees to grow and do their best, we strengthen and enable our learners to do the same.



BELONGING AND MEANINGFUL WORK

Foster an inclusive community where belonging, meaningful work, and public service support the flourishing of all.

CU Denver is more than just a place to work: it's a community in which we celebrate each other and hold one another to high standards. We challenge one another to generate positive momentum, and we work together to build an environment that fosters growth and excellence in all we do. Anchored in a culture of belonging, empathy, and support, we recognize our responsibility as stewards of a public-serving institution, and we work to create a university that others strive to emulate. We are confident that when CU Denver achieves its ambitions, we will increase opportunities, pride, and impact for all.



OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS

To ensure we are advancing our priorities, we will measure our progress through a series of key metrics. We will use these measures to assess our progress, identify areas for improvement, celebrate successes, and identify future opportunities to increase our impact through 2030 and beyond.

LEARNER GROWTH

CU Denver is committed to helping every learner realize their full potential. By strengthening recruitment, student support, and academic success, we will create more pathways for learners to persist, graduate, and create transformational change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

- New first-time degree-seeking undergraduates from high schools in 10-county Denver metro area¹:
Meet or exceed 36% growth from fall 2025 levels (domestic undergraduates only)
- New transfer degree-seeking undergraduates from colleges in 10-county Denver metro area:
Meet or exceed 46% growth from fall 2025 levels (domestic undergraduates only)
- Retention of first-time, full-time undergraduate students from first-to-second fall term:
90% retention
- Retention of transfer students from first-to-second fall term:
90% retention
- Undergraduate degree-seeking persistence rate from spring term to fall term:
90% persistence
- Six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who are part of the class of 2029 (and thereafter):
65% six-year graduation
- Percent of students who experience belonging at CU Denver:
Meet or exceed 70% of students who agree or strongly agree with survey measures of belonging at CU Denver

¹ 10-county Denver metro area refers to Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Douglas, Elbert, Jefferson, Park, and Gilpin.

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

CU Denver is committed to making higher education accessible, affordable, and transformative for every learner who entrusts us with their future. We will continue expanding access for learners from all backgrounds while ensuring a CU Denver education delivers outcomes that drive economic mobility, strengthen communities, and change lives.

- Percent of fall degree-seeking undergraduates who are Pell-eligible:
Maintain current level at 48% (domestic undergraduates only)
- Percent of fall degree-seeking undergraduates who are first-generation:
Maintain current level at 50% (domestic undergraduates only)
- Average loan debt at graduation for bachelor's degree recipients who started as first-time students at CU Denver:
At or below \$31,000
- Social mobility ranking as published by U.S. News & World Report:
Remain #1 in Colorado

PLACEMENT AND CAREER READINESS

CU Denver is committed to ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to translate knowledge into practice through hands-on experiences that prepare them for meaningful careers, advanced degrees, and lifelong success. By embedding experiential learning throughout the curriculum, we will strengthen opportunities for learners to achieve their goals and thrive after graduation.

- Percent of academic degree programs that include at least one qualifying experiential learning opportunity (to be determined by a program assessment rubric):
100%
- Percent of bachelor's degree recipients who complete at least one experiential learning experience:
100%
- Percent of spring graduates who successfully enter a career or enroll in further education²:
TBD%

² CU Denver is implementing an enhanced first destination data collection to gather more robust data and increase response rates. Goal will be available December 2026.

MEANINGFUL IMPACT

CU Denver is committed to advancing research, scholarship, and partnerships that impact the communities we serve. Our research enterprise supports learner development and prioritizes community engagement to ensure that our teaching and discovery create positive change.

- Total (overall) annual sponsored research and related activities expenditures:
Meet or exceed \$29 million
- Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement:
Achieve classification

EMPLOYEE BELONGING AND MEANINGFUL WORK

CU Denver is committed to advancing a workplace culture that enables employees to feel connected, valued, and purposeful. We believe that CU Denver's success depends on creating systems and structures that enable employees to do their best work.

- Percent of employees (faculty and staff) who are retained within CU Denver annually:
Meet or exceed 92%
- Percent of employees who experience belonging at CU Denver:
Meet or exceed 65% of employees (faculty and staff) who agree or strongly agree with survey items that measure factors that support belonging and meaningful work.
- Percent of employees who experience internal mobility annually³:
Meet or exceed 13%

³ Internal mobility refers to the ability for retained employees to move into new roles or levels or responsibility—the move may be lateral or vertical, and movement within the CU System is included.