Excellence in Leadership event examines teamwork, honors CU Anschutz dean[1]

Scout out benefits plan changes ahead of Open Enrollment [2]

From memory loss to heart disease, stress and insomnia can take a toll [3]

Federal transition update: DOE F&A cap, student visas, NSF updates, HHS proposed budget cuts[4]

From April 18, this federal government update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on the DOE F&A cap, student visas, NSF updates and HHS proposed budget cuts.

Click here to read the post.[5]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Transitions Update[6] page.

Inaugural speech highlights CU Boulder strengths [7]

UCCS wins first place in National Cybersecurity Outreach Competition for second consecutive year [8]

World Quantum Day at CU Denver [9]

Inclusive excellence celebrated with annual awards, grants[10]

Dozens of CU community members from across the system recently gathered to celebrate the recipients of this year's President's Inclusive Excellence Awards and Grants.

The April 17 event at 1800 Grant St. featured appearances by CU leaders including President Todd Saliman and Judi Diaz Bonacquisti, vice president for collaboration, as well as awardees and nominators from the four campuses.

The President's Inclusive Excellence Awards[11] honor individuals and units who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and made significant contributions to advancing inclusive excellence within the CU community. The annual awards are open to people and units who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and achievement in advancing the university's strategic goals that enhance CU's ability to innovate, solve problems and serve diverse constituencies, integrate inclusive strategies into structures, remove barriers and create pathways to success, while

creating environments where people feel valued, respected and empowered to contribute.

Nominations were reviewed by the President's Awards Committee, which includes representatives from each CU campus. Recipients of the honor receive $2,000 and a commemorative award.

The President's Inclusive Excellence Grants[12] support innovative and creative initiatives that advance inclusive excellence across CU. Grants provide up to $8,000 for one year.

Recipients of the 2025 President's Inclusive Excellence Awards are:

Student-Undergraduate
[13]

Nicholas Lomax was an undergraduate in international business at CU Denver through fall 2024, when he completed his bachelor's degree, and is now a graduate student in CU Denver's MBA program. Previously, he served six years active duty in the U.S. Army and one year in the Army National Guard. During his service, he received the Army Good Conduct Medal (twice), the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Combat Medal (when deployed to Afghanistan) and multiple certificates for outstanding service, including recognition of his completion of testing new and upcoming equipment for combat services.

When he enrolled at CU Denver, Lomax saw a need to build community among Black students and veteran students on campus. His desire to make a difference in the lives of his peers, campus and community resulted in his founding CU Denver's Black Student Organization/Union, and his active participation in CU Denver's CIBERVets program. Besides helping students increase their sense of belonging by coordinating meet-and-greet events, Lomax led academic events, including hosting a discussion with Professor Dennis Green on genealogy and discovering who you are and where you come from. Lomax enrolled in Empowering Women in Business to strengthen his role as a male ally in professional settings.

According to one of his nominators, Lomax is sincere about supporting the success of other students and their academic progression through student organizations, because he did "not wish to join anything that isn't truly committed to positive change."

Student-Graduate
[14]

Gabrielle Vragel is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Immunology and Microbiology at the School of Medicine on the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. An active member of the microbiology student council, Vragel has used her position to advocate for meaningful change. She created a monthly newsletter that compiles a wide array of valuable resources, information and actionable insights into a succinct, accessible format. It also includes an anonymous feedback mechanism that allows students and faculty to share concerns and suggestions related to inclusivity issues. Vragel then brings those issues forward to leadership.

Besides her efforts within the microbiology program, Vragel has taken on the significant challenge of improving the emergency evacuation plan for disabled individuals across the CU Anschutz campus. She has spearheaded efforts to improve accommodations and awareness for individuals with invisible illnesses. According to one nominator, "Gabrie's respectful consideration of both peers and leadership and her undaunted spirit make her a very impactful student leader and change-maker."

Faculty
[15]

Padi Fuster Aguilera, Ph.D., is a National Science Foundation Mathematical and Physical Science Ascend Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Mathematics at CU Boulder. She works to lead CU's participation in several national initiatives that aim to make access to mathematical careers more equitable among people of all races, genders and ethnicities.

Fuster Aguilera is the main organizer of the National Conference “Math for All,” which she founded at Tulane University in 2020. Thanks to her efforts, the conference has evolved into six in-person satellite events around the country and an online conference. Last year’s Math for All in Boulder conference included 68 participants from 10 institutions, including CU Boulder and CU Denver.

Fuster Aguilera designed an instructor workshop to facilitate other instructors adopting poster assignments in their courses. She also is one of the main organizers of the innovative “Mates para Todes,” a meeting that celebrates the contributions of Latines and Hispanics in mathematics at CU Boulder. Fuster Aguilera was the leader behind the organization of Math COSMOS, which became an established student group that regularly organizes activities to support all undergraduate students in the math department, with an emphasis on the needs of those from underrepresented groups.

As one nominator noted, Fuster Aguilera is “a tireless advocate for our graduate and undergraduate students. I am frankly amazed at the quantity and quality of the work Dr. Fuster Aguilera has accomplished here as a postdoc. Our department and our campus have hugely benefited from the work Dr. Fuster Aguilera has done towards inclusive excellence.”

Staff
[16]

Amy Moreno-Sherwood is the director of the BOLD Center at CU Boulder, where she leads a dynamic team of staff members who oversee academic services, two major scholarship programs, nine affinity-based student organizations, operations and communications. Moreno-Sherwood is widely recognized for her commitment to intercultural development. According to one nominator, “Put simply, Amy is the most knowledgeable person I know in the realm of inclusive excellence (inside or outside of CU). Her willingness to share and support colleagues is not part of her job description but is so impactful to our collective growth in this area.”

Moreno-Sherwood led the development of a BOLD Center 2024-2029 Strategic Vision, engaging multiple constituencies. Because the College of Engineering and Applied Science (CEAS) was conducting a parallel strategic visioning process, she ensured the processes were aligned throughout. Under her guidance, the BOLD Center has achieved significant milestones from the past academic year, including: 91% retention rate for scholars in the 2023 entry cohort to their second year in engineering; 65% of BOLD scholarship recipients identifying as BIPOC and 53% as female; 50% participation of BIPOC students in BOLD programs, with 39% of scholars identifying as first-generation students; engagement of 708 students in student societies, with 64% female membership; and 149 students attending professional society conferences.

Moreno-Sherwood has hosted visits from donors and peer institutions seeking to replicate the BOLD Center’s high-impact programs and outcomes. Her ability to scale inclusive excellence across institutions underscores her dedication to creating a legacy of equity and opportunity.

Unit
[17]

Project CREST (Changing Research Experiences, Structures and (in)Tolerance) is a groundbreaking initiative established in 2020 with the aim of cultivating an inclusive research environment while demystifying the pathway to full professorship. Because UCCS has no office of Faculty Affairs, Project CREST filled the gap for faculty by co-creating policies, generating new annual evaluation criteria, and reimagining processes that include all voices, especially those that are often unheard and left out. Including targeted support to women-identified faculty members in fields where they are traditionally underrepresented, Project CREST outcomes have benefited all faculty at UCCS.

Project CREST’s Leadership team consists of faculty and leadership from across the UCCS campus, including co-PIs, faculty fellows or hired staff. Members of Project CREST have been praised for communicating their activities, which include hosting welcoming venues for presentation of and feedback on their work, and organizing workshops that support hiring, promotion, merit review and inclusive forms of scholarship – often student-engaged scholarship, which

is a high-impact teaching practice.

The research infrastructure has been strengthened by the imagining of a new Research Development Coordinator (RDC) position to provide wraparound support for faculty. In this role, the RDC facilitates grant-writing bootcamps, offers one-on-one support for locating research funding, reviews grant proposals, assists with publications and coordinates the Belayer research mentoring network events. Given the small research infrastructure at UCCS, this approach to offering a personal approach to facilitate sponsored program activity and research productivity is remarkable.

One nominator noted, “I did not hesitate to sign up for one of their Considered Conversations two years ago to engage with their White Paper so I could learn more about the definitions of scholarship at our university. I know that hot topics can too often come and go, which is why I really appreciate that Project CREST is systematic and builds on important issues of inclusive excellence. The considered conversation is a great example of how to raise awareness and motivate short- and long-term change that improves all of us on campus.”

Recipients of the 2025 President’s Inclusive Excellence Grants are:

CU Anschutz

Bridging Gaps: Proactive Integration of Cultural and Personal Values in Healthcare Systems. Project Leads: Chelsey Patten, Director of Clinical Ethics, Center for Bioethics and Humanities; Gianna Morales, Clinical Ethicist, Center for Bioethics and Humanities

“Mini” American Indian and Alaska Native Health Course. Project Leads: Jenn Russell, Research Instructor and Diversity Recruitment Specialist, Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health; Jerreed Ivanich, Assistant Professor and Director of the Certificate in American Indian and Alaska Native Health, Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health; Jaylee Rencountre, Professional Research Assistant and Community Outreach Specialist, Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health; Erin Poole, Research Instructor and Associate Director, Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health

CU Boulder

Expanding Colorado Voices: Promoting the Public Influence of CU Scholars. Project Leads: Christine Larson, Assistant Professor of Journalism; Nabil Echchaibi, Professor of Media Studies, Associate Dean of Scholarly and Creative Work, College of Media, Communication and Information

Empowering Inclusive Teaching Practices: Universal Design for Learning and Neurodiversity Training for Instructors and Course Assistants. Project Leads: Azadeh Bolhari, Associate Professor of Teaching, Civil, Environmental, Architectural Engineering; Angela Bielefeldt, Professor, Civil, Environmental, Architectural Engineering, Director Engineering Education Program

CUSG Health and Safety Supplies Vending Machine. Project Leads: Paige Behrens, Director of Student Engagement, CU Student Government; Aris Larson, Health and Safety Chair, CU Student Government.

CU Denver

Fostering a Continued Love of Learning Through Educator Institutes. Project Lead: Dr. Kelly Cvanciger, NHDC State Director, Department of History

“Homeland: Nepali Modernism and the Art of Lain Singh Bangdel.” Project Leads: Yang Wang, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Art History, Visual Arts Department, College of Arts & Media; Jeff Lambson, Director, Emmanuel Art Gallery

UCCS

Main Hall Accessibility & Emergency Preparedness – Evacuation Chair. Project Lead: Rachel Gibson, Associate Director, Disability Services & University Testing Center

The Heller Center Indigenous Fellowship. Project Leads: Max Shulman, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Visual and Performing Arts; Director of the Heller Center for Arts & Humanities; Rhonda Goodman-Gaghan, Assistant Director and Curator, Heller Center for Arts & Humanities

Using a Pre-Orientation Experience to Address First-Generation Student Retention and Sense of Community. Project Leads: Ashley San Miguel, First2Go Coordinator, MOSAIC; Nancy Hernandez, Executive Director, Pre-Collegiate Development Program; Whitley Hadley, Director, MOSAIC

Hickcox wins 2025 Cogswell Award for Inspirational Instruction [18]

Shulman named artistic director of Theatreworks [19]

Fox receives Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers [20]

When They Don’t Recognize You Anymore[21]

Where to see art in Denver now: The 2025 edition[22]

As depression becomes more common in the US, treatment rates vary, CDC reports show[23]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/excellence-leadership-event-examines-teamwork-honors-cu-anschutz-dean[2] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/scout-out-benefits-plan-changes-ahead-open-enrollment[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/memory-loss-heart-disease-stress-and-insomnia-can-take-toll[4] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/federal-transition-update-doe-fa-cap-student-visas-nsf-updates-hhs-proposed-budget-cuts[5] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-transition-update-41825[6] https://www.cu.edu/federal-transition-updates[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/inaugural-speech-highlights-cu-boulder-strengths[8] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-wins-first-place-national-cybersecurity-outreach-competition-second-consecutive-year[9] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/world-quantum-day-cu-denver[10]

https://connections.cu.edu/stories/inclusive-excellence-celebrated-annual-awards-grants[11]
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ps://www.cu.edu/collaboration/presidents-inclusive-excellence-awards-and-grants/presidents-inclusive-excellence[12]

[13] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/ie_awards_saliman_lomax_04-24-2025.jpg[14]
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