

[Fiske, CU-Boulder projecting star power across the country](#)[1]

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NASA is famous for reaching for the stars and “revealing the unknown,” and now the University of Colorado Boulder’s Fiske Planetarium plans to help inform millions of people about some of NASA’s new discoveries through short films that will be distributed to planetariums across the nation.

The shorts will be produced under the direction of Douglas Duncan, Fiske director, through a \$1 million NASA education grant. It is hoped that the two-minute to four-minute films will not only generate interest in science but also strengthen CU’s brand.

The new Fiske Planetarium is no stranger to film production. It projects videos over its full dome, which is “one of the highest resolution video screens in the United States,” Duncan said. “It’s completely state of the art, and in preparation for that, we have set up a small video production team.”

[WATCH VIDEO: The Cosmic Origins Spectrograph](#)[3]

The team includes a video producer of education programs, Thor Metzinger, who also works with faculty to produce classroom videos. Fiske has produced a full-length planetarium show – “Cosmic Origins” – which was released to planetariums around the country a few months ago.

Besides Metzinger, the production team will be made up of researchers to ensure the best stories and best images from NASA will be incorporated into the films. CU film students and Fiske’s audio engineer also will be members of the team.

Duncan estimates each new video will take four to six months to produce. The team also will develop a Web page that will contain more information than a short video can impart.

The news shorts will likely play as people are entering theaters or directly prior to the main presentation. Because the work is funded by NASA, planetariums will have access to the shorts for free. Rental costs for full-length, full-dome features often exceed \$20,000 a year.

About 20 million people visit planetariums each year, and the potential impact of the films for CU is huge, Duncan said.

“We expect to be in hundreds of planetariums, probably in all 50 states,” he said. “Since this will be a five-year series, we want to establish a brand. One of the explicit goals is to establish in people’s minds all over the country that the University of Colorado, the Department of Astrophysical and Planetary Sciences and Fiske Planetarium are national leaders when it comes to space and science teaching.”

CU will develop an introductory theme and logo in the hopes that people will anticipate a new and interesting release from the university each time they visit a planetarium.

“I know from experience that if you present science in an intriguing way, people love it,” said Duncan, who discusses science on Colorado Public Radio’s “Colorado Matters” once a month. Previously, he spent four years as the “science guy” who offered science commentary for National Public Radio at WBEZ-Chicago.

The news shorts are expected to be released quarterly, beginning in the summer of 2016, and will highlight space discoveries, but also show other examples of NASA’s work.

“When you say NASA, people think Mars and deep space and the sun’s effects on us, but a huge part of what NASA does is examine the Earth,” said Duncan.

Drought in California has recently spurred discussion of water conservation and other topics. NASA satellites are able to see underneath the Earth’s crust and show that underground water supplies also are shrinking.

"Keeping track of the planet's water is very important and it's a fascinating story that most people don't know about," Duncan said.

Another example of a news video that Fiske might produce is about the upcoming total eclipse of the sun on Aug. 21, 2017. It will be the first total eclipse of the sun in 40 years and will be visible from Oregon to South Carolina. Duncan, who has chased eclipses around the world, will lead a CU alumni journey to view the event.

Other news topics will likely include CU-related discoveries. CU-Boulder is a national leader in astronomy, aerospace and Earth sciences and receives more funding from NASA than any other public university.

CU is one of 27 science partners to receive the education grants.

Duncan hopes CU's full-dome videos will become as well-known as "StarDate," a radio program produced by the McDonald Observatory at the University of Texas that debuted in 1978 and still is heard on more than 300 radio stations across the country. "[StarDate](#)"[4] explains the science, history and skylore behind the objects in the night sky as well as providing up-to-date information on research and space missions. At one time, Duncan said, the radio program was nearly as well-known as the Hubble Telescope.

"If we do this right, it will have a huge impact on CU," Duncan said. "We want to become the equivalent of StarDate and put CU on the map even more than the University of Texas."

[WATCH VIDEO: Fiske Production Reel](#)[3]

[Tuition waiver benefit decision expected by spring](#)[5]

President Bruce Benson says he's expecting resolution of long-running work on the university's tuition waiver benefit in the spring.

"We're going to have closure to something by spring," Benson told the Faculty Senate during its Dec. 3 meeting at the Warwick Hotel in Denver. "I'm going to start pushing the campuses. There's a lot of nuance to it. I think we need to spend the time to come to a conclusion and move on."

Expansion and improved usability of the tuition waiver benefit has been a priority of Faculty Council and Staff Council for years. The benefit varies at each of the four campuses and system.

In recent months, [governance groups have worked with administrators](#)[6] to pursue possible ways of streamlining and simplifying the application process for tuition benefits.

"I was glad to hear President Benson's commitment to the tuition benefit," Faculty Council Chair John McDowell said later in the meeting. "The charge to the CFOs has been to figure out how much this is going to cost and can we do it?"

Benson made his comments during a question-and-answer session with the Faculty Senate, where he provided updates on activity and issues across the system. He pointed to enrollment gains, the arrival of incoming CU Denver Chancellor Dorothy Horrell and the systemwide All Four:Colorado marketing effort as strong positives.

"In general, I feel pretty good about everything at CU right now," Benson said.

As has often been the case in recent years, a top concern remains the state budget, Benson said. The governor's [initial proposal for the 2016-17 fiscal year](#)[7] likely would mean cuts of up to \$6 million to CU.

Last week's meeting also included an update from Privilege and Tenure Committee Chair Tom Napierkowski, who said the committee has been contacted seven times this academic year, but that none of the instances has yet been registered as an official grievance. Napierkowski said that his successor as committee chair at the end of the year will be Anna Hasenfratz of CU-Boulder.

The Faculty Council also voted to approve minor revisions to [APS 1016](#)^[8] regarding allocation of sponsored project funding and facilities and administrative cost rates, specifically pertaining to projects funded on more than one campus.

[Slower but continued expansion expected in 2016 for Colorado economy](#)^[9]

[Expanded bus options coming in 2016](#)^[10]

[#GivingTuesday raises \\$85,000+ in 24 hours](#)^[11]

[Students name welcome center in honor of Wartgow](#)^[12]

[Philanthropy At Work: Cathy Bodine](#)^[13]

[Maier wins prestigious psychology award](#) ^[14]

[Wagner appointed vice chancellor of advancement at CU Denver](#)^[15]

[Davis to step down as dean of CU-Boulder College of Engineering](#)^[16]

[AVC for Strategic Media Relations Hilliard leaving CU-Boulder](#)^[17]

[Campbell elected president of consumer research association](#) ^[18]

[Education Policy Networking Series: Colorado School Finance in 2016 and Beyond](#)[19]

The Great Recession and Colorado's constitutional revenue restrictions have combined to make budgeting for education a significant challenge. In addition, an outdated method of distributing revenue to school districts disadvantages areas most affected by poverty and has not kept pace with Colorado's changing demographics. Finally, resource allocation at the district level must adapt to evolving education priorities and school types.

Join us to hear from school finance experts at the national, state and local district level as we discuss the future of school finance in Colorado.

Please join us for this meeting of emerging policy-savvy teachers and education policy leaders. This is a great chance to connect with like-minded colleagues and learn about opportunities to get more involved.

Light refreshments will be served to encourage networking before the panel.

Time will be reserved for audience questions as well.

The program is free, but space is limited! Please [RSVP HERE](#)[20].

Unable to attend but would still like to participate? Tune in remotely! Join us by phone, computer or tablet by [accessing this link](#)[21].

Panelists:

Leanne Emm, Associate Commissioner, School Finance and Operations

Mark Fermanich, Senior Associate, APA Consulting

Mark Ferrandino, Chief Financial Officer, Denver Public Schools

Tracie Rainey, Executive Director, Colorado School Finance Project

Moderator: Mary Wickersham, Director, Center for Education Policy Analysis, School of Public Affairs, CU Denver

[Movie and a Martini: "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation"](#)[22]

Movie and a Martini featuring National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation

For more information: <http://southdenver.cu.edu/events/event/christmas-vacation-december18/>[23]

[Thousands show up in Colorado Springs to honor life of UCCS Officer Swasey](#)[24]

[CWA may pay keynote speaker, invite Coloradans to participate on panels](#)[25]

[CU-Boulder asks: What's driving construction cost overruns on campus?](#)[26]

Links

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<https://stardate.org/radio>[5] <https://connections.cu.edu/stories/tuition-waiver-benefit-decision-expected-spring>[6]
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<https://connections.cu.edu/itn/thousands-show-colorado-springs-honor-life-uccs-officer-swasey>[25]
<https://connections.cu.edu/itn/cwa-may-pay-keynote-speaker-invite-coloradans-participate-panels>[26]
<https://connections.cu.edu/itn/cu-boulder-asks-whats-driving-construction-cost-overruns-campus>