Champions of open educational resources honored with annual awards[1]
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The Office of Academic Affairs and the Open CU Committee on Tuesday recognized exceptional individuals dedicated to open educational resources (OER) with the OER Champion Awards. Each honoree received a $650 award and was recognized by President Todd Saliman at the awards presentation hosted by the Office of Academic Affairs at 1800 Grant St.

The event also featured the announcement of a record amount of funding through the Colorado OER Grant Program, promising the continued adoption and creation of OER to benefit University of Colorado students at the four campuses.

CU faculty received four grants through the Colorado OER Grant Program in three funding categories for a total of $244,070 – nearly a quarter of the $1 million available for the annual award. State funding amounts since 2018 have resulted in an estimated fourfold return in cost savings for CU students in learning materials (open textbooks, courses, syllabi, lectures, assignments, quizzes, lab activities, games and simulations).

CU OER Champions 2024

Niki Juhl and Tisha Mendiola Jessop

Niki Juhl, associate teaching professor, and Tisha Mendiola Jessop, teaching professor, of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UCCS, partnered on the creation of an undergraduate chemistry lab manual. The manual incorporates real-time edits, relevant media and current events and gives students access to current academic research. The manual has been well-received by students across five labs. Said one student, “The labs are easy to understand and give a real-life application that supports the material being taught. I really like that they don’t cost money.”

Alexander Saltzman

Alexander Saltzman, assistant teaching professor in the Student Academic Success Center at CU Boulder, created adaptations, ancillary materials and a learning management system Canvas cartridge file, all supporting students in general chemistry textbooks in various high-enrollment courses. A hallmark of Salzman’s approach to creating OER is considering accessibility and ease of use early on in the process. All videos are closed-captioned, and he provides instructions so educators may easily integrate the materials into their own courses. Sharing the content in the common cartridge format means that educators using learning management systems may quickly structure their own adaptations. Saltzman advocates on behalf of students and students’ rights and encourages educators to take action in response to the financial burdens and barriers of higher education, including participating in the CU Boulder Open CU Course OER Adaptation and Creation Initiative.

Teresa Connolly

Teresa Connolly, assistant professor in the College of Nursing at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus, was honored for the creation of nursing OER materials and an open site for nursing OER ancillary materials to which nursing faculty can submit their OER. A fierce advocate of OER campuswide, Connolly is also a 2024 recipient of CDHE funding for a collaborative grant with the pre-nursing track at Fort Lewis College to create a bachelor of science in nursing degree with zero textbook cost. Awarded the highest annual amount of $100,000, this shared undertaking will increase accessibility and decrease the burden of textbook costs for students. Connolly said the collaboration will expand the nursing workforce and also provide innovative solutions to nursing shortages in rural areas, health inequities in diverse communities, and the nursing profession’s need for diversification.

Jiayue Cecilia Wu

Jiayue Cecilia Wu, assistant professor in the College of Arts & Media at CU Denver, was recognized for creating course materials for the courses Digital Music Techniques and Music, Meditation and Tech. The OER materials enhance the courses' effectiveness by providing students with high-quality, cost-free learning materials tailored to the subject matter. The projected cost savings is $10,000 per student in synthesizer sound design. An active participant in the campus OER community and advocate for its growth among faculty, Wu also runs a student advisory group for her own project, engaging them in what is called inclusive pedagogy. "The initiative aims to eliminate costs for students, making cutting-edge audio engineering studio technologies universally accessible and reducing financial burdens on marginalized students at CU Denver and beyond," Wu said. She was also awarded a $5,000 individual grant this year from the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) for this project.

Other state grant recipients

Maureen Stabio

Maureen Stabio, associate professor in modern human anatomy at CU Anschutz, was awarded a CDHE collaborative grant of $65,400. Stabio will work with various higher education institutions and high schools to utilize the resources in specific courses. The project goal is to create an online open educational repository of human anatomy 3D models and resources. The Colorado OER Anatomy Hub will be hosted on the CU Anschutz Strauss Health Sciences Library server and linked to the Modern Human Anatomy (MHA) Program website. "Our target demographic includes high schools and undergraduate institutions which may not have access to donors or expensive, anatomically correct teaching models," Stabio said. "This is a completely unique OER which has not been undertaken by another institution in Colorado."

Mathematical and Statistical Sciences

Funded by the state since 2022, the Department of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences at CU Denver has maintained momentum for adopting, adapting and developing high-quality OER and zero textbook cost (ZTC, or Z degree) content. This third year of CDHE funding at $68,670 is dedicated to creating Z-degree pathways within the mathematics BS, mathematics minor, and data science certificate. These changes benefit not only math majors and minors, but hundreds of students across many departments and majors who take math courses as part of their degree requirements. This also has the potential to benefit many high school students concurrently enrolled in our courses through CU Succeed. The learning materials created utilize virtual laboratory settings to enable an active computational learning environment.

The Colorado OER Grant Program is state funded through 2027. Learn more here.[3]

For more information on getting involved in OER, see the AIP Open CU website.[4]

President Saliman's series of campus visits begins with UCCS, CU Anschutz[5]

President Todd Saliman recently visited UCCS and the CU Anschutz Medical Campus, meeting with members of the campus communities, including shared governance leaders. The president also has scheduled upcoming stops at CU Boulder and CU Denver as part of his series of visits.

The visit by the president and members of his team to UCCS late last month came shortly after the tragic on-campus events. Saliman commended community members for their outstanding work under the circumstances.

"It's clear the UCCS community is still processing, grieving and recovering, but I was struck by the tremendous amount of love, support and strength within and surrounding the campus," Saliman said. "It's inspiring to see how the community is working together."

Among the topics discussed during the daylong visit was enrollment management and associated challenges. Outreach and technology are tools being used to improve student enrollment and retention.

Dean Kevin Laudner and department chairs from the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Sciences highlighted a new partnership between UCCS and CU Anschutz. UCCS students can earn a doctorate in physical therapy via a hybrid program that shares the same coursework and requirements as the CU Anschutz program. Students complete coursework primarily online with occasional visits to UCCS to work with faculty from both campuses before ultimately earning their doctorate from CU Anschutz.

The program is ideal for residents of rural Colorado who want to advance their skills and earn a degree in physical therapy but are unable to attend CU Anschutz. Laudner said the college aims to further partner with CU Anschutz in the future.

Saliman also met with UCCS deans to discuss budget challenges, as well as ways to share stories of campus excellence with the entire state. Danielle Radovich Piper, senior vice president for external relations and strategy, discussed how system marketing efforts will be part of that.

Communicating research opportunities to potential students provided a topic of discussion with the UCCS Research Faculty Advisory Board, whose members shared examples of their exciting work. The board also highlighted how it's engaging UCCS graduate students and undergraduates in research.

The president's day on campus concluded with the retirement celebration for Carlos Garcia, vice chancellor for student affairs. Saliman thanked Garcia, who has worked on campus for eight years and has been at CU for over 25 years.

Saliman's January visit to CU Anschutz included a tour of the Center for Advancing Professional Excellence (CAPE), which showcased incredible training and resources it provides to health care professionals and those about to enter the field. Visitors observed trainees engaging with realistic mannequins, which Saliman also had the opportunity to learn from, and actors as patients bringing to life high-pressure scenarios.

A wide-ranging discussion with leaders from faculty, staff and student governance leaders examined highlights, opportunities and challenges on campus. The president and his team also met with leaders to discuss diversity efforts and progress around faculty recruitment and retention. They presented data, strategies, wins and challenges in recruiting and retaining diverse faculty.

The daylong visit to CU Anschutz also included a stop at CU Innovations, where faculty inventors are attracting the interest of top-tier investors. Finally, at the Center for Health Artificial Intelligence (CHAI), visitors learned about the center's work to better understand drug efficacy for individuals with specific diseases and genetic conditions using AI. CHAI's partnership with the Colorado Center for Personalized Medicine – which focuses on providing protocols and immediate clinical advice to health care professionals based on a patient's genetic makeup – is yielding work that promises to transform health and health care.

President Saliman's campus visits will continue next at CU Boulder and CU Denver.

Anthem members can fill maintenance medications at Kroger pharmacies beginning April 1 [6]

Forbes ranks the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus among America's Best Employers [7]

Early childhood health interventions have ‘big, multi-generation impacts,’ research finds [8]

Mechanical engineering students get pumped up to find solutions [9]

CU Denver co-hosts second 5280 Thought Forum [10]

CU Nursing Fort Lewis College Collaborative to break ground on $2.9 million state-of-the-art nursing training facility [11]

Boy Scouts to honor DiStefanos April 12 in Boulder [12]

Shang named new dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science[13]

Leamer to step down from chair of Clinical Faculty Affairs Committee [14]

How do we get Colorado students to pursue higher education and work in state?[15]

CU studying use of patients’ own reprogrammed cells to attack cancer as alternative to more chemo[16]

This New App Uses the Characters from Inside Out to Help Little Coloradans Understand Their Biggest Feelings [17]

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