Video: From first-generation student to cancer researcher at CU Anschutz[1]

At CU Anschutz, where research and patient care intersect daily, Burciaga's work is strengthened by a collaborative network of mentors and peers. Together, they are helping refine CAR-T cell therapies[2] and related immunotherapies by exploring how immune cells can be engineered or activated to more effectively target cancer.

Beyond the lab, Burciaga is committed to mentorship, giving back to the community and helping open doors for future scientists.

Watch the video (above) to see how Burciaga is shaping cancer research and inspiring the next generation.

Regents recognize exceptional individuals with annual awards[3]

The University of Colorado Board of Regents has announced the 2026 list of individuals receiving Honorary Degrees, Distinguished Service Awards and University Medals.

Upon the recommendation of the Regents Awards Selection Committee, the full Board of Regents in November approved the nominees. Each recipient has been invited to attend a campus commencement ceremony to accept an award; the dates and locations are to be announced.

Honorary Degrees recognize outstanding achievement in one or more of the following areas: intellectual contributions, university service, philanthropy and/or public service.

Distinguished Service Awards recognize those persons whose achievements and contributions are particularly associated with the state and/or nation.

University Medals recognize those persons whose achievements and contributions are particularly associated with the university.

The 2026 recipients are:

Honorary Degrees

Sue Anschutz-Rodgers (CU Anschutz)

Richard "Dick" Brown (CU Anschutz)

William King (CU Boulder)

Alice Mortenson (CU Boulder)

Distinguished Service Awards

Lorii Rabinowitz (CU Denver)

June Waller (UCCS)

University Medals

Jim Hodge (CU Anschutz)

Deborah Mahan (UCCS)

Clyde Zaidins (CU Denver)

Learn more about the honorees below:

Honorary Degrees

Sue Anschutz-Rodgers (CU Anschutz)

Sue Anschutz-Rodgers is a trailblazing rancher, conservationist and philanthropist known for transformative contributions to health care, education and conservation. As chair and president of the Anschutz Family Foundation since 1982, she has overseen over 10,000 grants totaling $60 million, supporting rural and underserved communities. Her philanthropic legacy includes founding the Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Fund to promote women's self-sufficiency and leadership. Her first major CU gift in 1988 to the CU Anschutz College of Nursing marked the beginning of a legacy of giving that includes support for the CU Anschutz Cancer Center and the Ludeman Family Center for Women's Health Research. Most prominently at CU Anschutz, she endowed the Sue Anschutz-Rodgers Eye Center, which has become a national leader in vision research and care. Her support has enabled groundbreaking scientific achievements, attracted NIH funding and fostered innovative solutions in ophthalmology.

Anschutz-Rodgers also pioneered conservation easements in Colorado, co-founding the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust to protect working ranchlands. Her leadership extends globally, with board service for organizations such as the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya. Recognized with numerous honors, including induction into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame, Anschutz-Rodgers' lifelong dedication to philanthropy and public service has left an indelible mark on Colorado and beyond.

Richard "Dick" Brown (CU Anschutz)

Dedicated philanthropist Richard "Dick" Brown, '54, is a University of Colorado Boulder alumnus and longtime supporter of the university. His significant contributions to CU have focused on education and the advancement of medical research and women's health. His generosity includes establishing two endowed chairs at CU Anschutz: the Joyce M. Brown Chair for Developmental Therapeutics in Women's Cancers and the Brown/Moore Endowed Chair in Excellence in the Patient Experience. He also has been a foundational supporter of CU Boulder's BioFrontiers Institute, including establishing the Joyce M. and Richard N. Brown Endowed Chair for the BioFrontiers Institute, and early leadership support for the BioFrontiers building.

Brown's commitment to CU Anschutz was solidified after his wife, Joyce, received life-saving cancer treatment at the campus in 2014. Since then, he has made significant gifts that have supported groundbreaking initiatives, especially women's health curriculum development and staff excellence at the Ludeman Family Center for Women's Health Research.

A CU Foundation Trustee since 1997, Brown has supported programs across CU's campuses, including the Benson Center for the Study of Western Civilization and the Center for the American West. A U.S. Army veteran, he has supported ROTC at CU Boulder and Boots to Suits at CU Denver. His successful career in insurance, securities, real estate development and banking showcased his strong business acumen. His work, as well as his philanthropic legacy and dedication to community service, have made a lasting impact.

William M. King (CU Boulder)

William M. King, Ph.D., professor emeritus at CU Boulder, is a distinguished scholar, educator and community leader. He was the second tenured African American professor at CU Boulder and the university's longest-serving Black professor (1972-2012) in history, known for pioneering contributions to Black Studies, transformative teaching and dedication to social justice.

During his 40-year career, King played a pivotal role in establishing CU Boulder's Black Studies curriculum, which later evolved into the Department of Ethnic Studies. He designed and taught numerous groundbreaking courses, including

“Black Religious Life in America” and “The Civil Rights Movement,” inspiring generations of students. A founding member of the National Council for Black Studies, King also served as its chairman and historian, shaping the discipline nationally.

An accomplished author, King has published books, scholarly articles and essays that explore African American history, science and public policy. His widely cited work has enriched academic discourse. Beyond academia, King has served as chairman of the Urban League of Metropolitan Denver and contributed to organizations such as the Black American West Museum and Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board.

Alice Mortenson (CU Boulder)

Alice Mortenson is a renowned philanthropist and community leader who has made exceptional contributions to education, public service and global development. Her enduring legacy of advocacy, collaboration and generosity has left a profound impact on CU Boulder and communities worldwide.

Mortenson – alongside her late husband, M.A. “Mort” Mortenson Jr. – co-founded the Mortenson Center in Global Engineering and Resilience at CU Boulder in 2009. The center has impacted over 5 million lives globally through innovative solutions addressing water, sanitation and resilience challenges. The center and its affiliates are involved in such international research programs as the?Sustainable WASH Systems partnership,?Bill Gates’ Reinvent the Toilet Challenge, and the?Drought Resilience Impact Platform. Graduate students participating in field practicums benefit from partnerships developed in over 80 countries.

Beyond CU Boulder, Mortenson has made significant contributions to education and community development. She and Mort co-founded the Mortenson Family Foundation, which focuses on expanding opportunities for children and families, sustaining environmental systems and strengthening developing communities. She established the Alice D. Mortenson/Petrovich Chair in Russian History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has served in leadership roles for numerous organizations, including Macalester College, Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.

Distinguished Service Awards

Lorii Rabinowitz (CU Denver)

Lorii Rabinowitz, CEO of the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF), is known for her transformative leadership and dedication to educational equity in Colorado. Since joining DSF in 2017, Rabinowitz has tripled fundraising revenue, more than doubled the organization’s staff, expanded its reach to serve over 16,000 Denver Public Schools students and graduates annually, and increased scholarship funding to a record $8.9 million in 2025. Under her guidance, DSF has been named a Top Workplace by The Denver Post for six consecutive years.

A recognized leader, Rabinowitz was named Denver Business Journal’s Most Admired CEO in 2023. Her many other accolades include Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce’s Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Business and the Girl Scouts of Colorado Women of Distinction Award. Her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic ensured uninterrupted student support, including virtual advising and access to expanded resources for food, housing and mental health.

Beyond DSF, Rabinowitz is a passionate volunteer, serving on boards and committees for organizations over the past several years including the CU Denver Business School, MSU Denver, Rose Community Foundation, Swedish Medical Center and Project Angel Heart. Known for her collaborative approach and commitment to equity, Rabinowitz has made a lasting impact on Colorado students, families and communities.

June Waller (UCCS)

June Waller, who studied at UCCS, has over five decades of service as a leader in Colorado Springs, advocating for social equity, community empowerment and public service. She has made significant contributions to housing, civic engagement and education in Colorado and beyond.

During her career with the Colorado Springs Housing Authority, her leadership directly improved access to affordable housing for countless families. She also advanced affordable housing policies while managing Denver's Section 8 Housing Program. She founded the Savvy Seniors Lunch Program, addressing food insecurity among older adults, and established the Hillside Advisory Team to combat gentrification and promote community health.

Waller's dedication to civil rights and voter education is evident through her work with the NAACP and the League of Women Voters. She played a key role in restoring the historic Leon Young Pavilion and preserving the legacy of Buffalo Soldiers in Colorado Springs. Her achievements have earned her numerous accolades, including the NAACP Living Legend Award, the League of Women Voters' Love the League Award and the Colorado Springs Business Journal Women of Influence Legacy Award.

University Medals

Jim Hodge (CU Anschutz)

During his eight-year tenure at CU Anschutz, Jim Hodge provided transformative leadership in philanthropy and made lasting contributions to the institution. As Associate Vice Chancellor of Advancement, he played a pivotal role in securing landmark gifts, including a $120 million commitment from The Anschutz Foundation. Under his leadership, annual contributions to the campus tripled and the endowment approached $1 billion, ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

While at CU Anschutz, he drew from experience in previous leadership roles at Mayo Clinic and Bowling Green State University, where he spearheaded major fundraising campaigns and initiatives. Known for his generosity, compassion and mentorship, Hodge fostered a culture of collaboration and innovation at CU Anschutz, leaving an indelible mark on the institution's operations and values. His strategic vision and ability to inspire stakeholders have been credited with reshaping the campus's philanthropic efforts and advancing its mission.

Valued for his enthusiasm, perspective and thoughtful counsel provided to leadership, Hodge has been a vital force in advancing the mission of CU Anschutz. His guidance helped with navigating critical moments for the campus, and his legacy continues to influence the community.

Deborah Mahan (UCCS)

Deborah Mahan, a distinguished alumna of the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, is widely recognized for her exceptional contributions to the university and the broader community. She graduated magna cum laude in psychology in 1999, embarking on postgraduate work focused on trauma. Ever since, she has demonstrated unwavering dedication to UCCS through philanthropy, advocacy and service.

As Executive Director of Gazette Charities Foundation and an affiliate of The Anschutz Foundation, Mahan facilitated over $5.4 million in funding for UCCS initiatives, including the Anschutz Engineering Center, Cybersecurity Center, Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience and the School of Public Service. She also played a pivotal role in creating the UCCS Fellowship with Gazette Charities and served on the UCCS Regional Connect for eight years, helping establish Downtown UCCS in 2020.

A champion for mental health, Mahan founded the Colorado Mental Health Consortium and serves as chair of the Lyda Hill Institute's Advisory Board. Her leadership on the board has advanced mental health initiatives including the GRIT program, which has achieved national and global impact. She further leads at the national level in her role as a vice president for the nonprofit Mindful Philanthropy. Mahan's lifelong commitment to health equity, education and community resilience exemplifies the values of UCCS.

Clyde Zaidins (CU Denver)

Clyde Zaidins, Ph.D., a distinguished physicist and founding faculty member of the University of Colorado Denver's Physics Department, built an extraordinary legacy of service, scholarship and philanthropy that spans more than five

decades.

Zaidins joined CU Denver in 1967 and played a pivotal role in establishing the Physics Department, serving as chair multiple times, including a return from retirement to stabilize the department from 2015 to 2019. A dedicated educator, he received multiple teaching awards, including the CU Denver College of Engineering and Applied Science Outstanding Teacher Award. He is renowned for his innovative NSF-funded modular science curriculum and his commitment to science communication through his “Just Ask Clyde” platform.

Beyond academia, Zaidins has been a tireless advocate for CU Denver’s growth and independence. His philanthropic efforts include establishing the Zaidins Family Endowed Undergraduate Research Award Fund and supporting student scholarships and emergency funds.

Zaidins’ lifelong dedication to education, research and community continues into his second retirement. He remains a visible and engaged presence on campus, attending events, mentoring students and serving as a vital link between past and present faculty.

‘We are capable of far more than we imagined’: Students learn their residency destinations on Match Day 2026 [4]

ChatGPT Edu access delayed for students[5]

Student access across all four University of Colorado campuses will be delayed until fall semester at the request of Faculty Council.

Members of faculty leadership raised concerns that providing access to students mid-semester would disrupt the learning environment. In response to their request, university leadership agreed to delay enrolled student access to Aug.14.

“We have heard concerns from faculty about disruption to the learning environment this semester and take Faculty Council concerns seriously. We fully endorse the right of faculty to establish and maintain their individual classroom expectations,” according to an email message from CU President Todd Saliman and all four campus chancellors.

All faculty and staff at the CU system office and all campuses will be provided access on March 31 as planned.

Proposal on collective bargaining delayed[6]

A planned proposal that would allow collective bargaining for University of Colorado employees not already covered by other agreements is being delayed while its sponsor conducts additional outreach.

Regent Elliott Hood, who had planned to introduce this proposal at the March meeting of the CU Board of Regents Governance Committee, alerted his fellow committee members to the slowdown.

“I wanted to make sure that I gave everyone, especially those already representing their fellow staff or faculty through the existing shared governance model, a chance to study and provide me with feedback on not only the idea, but how it could be structured to complement our system of shared governance,” Hood said.

Hood said that language previously circulating in the CU community was not necessarily his planned proposal and was

instead an idea of one approach. Hood said he would introduce any planned language through the Governance Committee process, where it would receive a full public review and debate.

Due to the way power is vested in the Board of Regents, any regent may bring a policy proposal through committee and ultimately to the full board. The process includes initial introduction in a committee, notification of the full board of the committee policy discussion, policy language introduction, debate and vote at the committee level followed by introduction of the policy to the full board. The vote at the committee level does not affect the ability of an individual regent to bring a proposal to the full board for consideration. Each step of the process is separated by at least a month.

Hood told his fellow committee members that he would develop a timeline for potential introduction and debate after he completes his planned outreach to various system and campus groups.

Last call for entries: 2026 CU Innovation & Efficiency Awards[7]

The CU Innovation & Efficiency (CU I&E) Awards Program recognizes and celebrates CU employees for their innovative ideas that save time, money and effort across our shared systems. The stories of these forward-thinking solutions inspire and benefit the entire CU community.

Deadline for submissions for the 2026 CU I&E Awards Program is midnight Tuesday, March 31.

Employees across our campuses have shared impressive examples of what they've achieved in finance and accounting, sponsored projects and research, sustainability, technology and training. This year's entries are already showcasing the creativity and ingenuity that drive progress across CU.

Explore all current project submissions here.[8]

With only five days remaining to submit, now is the time to share your own innovative project for the 2026 CU I&E Awards Program.

Submit your project now.[9]

Your project might be the next story of innovation we celebrate across CU.
Office of University Controller

CU Boulder launches campuswide visioning process for the future of online education [10]

New Carnegie seal implemented for R2 designation and use [11]

Colorado high school students are earning college credits early – and saving thousands [12]

Federal update: Government funding, UCAR lawsuit, more[13]

From March 20, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on Government Funding, UCAR Lawsuit, WH College Sports Roundtable, SBIR/STTR Reauthorization, Genesis Mission Application Invite, DOE Office of Science Reorganization, New FDA Drug Development Draft Guidance, and Ruling Against Updated Childhood Vaccine Schedule.

Click here to read the post.[14]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Updates and Actions[15] page.

Picton named chair of CU Anschutz Department of Anesthesiology [16]

Silvey to lead communications and marketing at UCCS [17]

Carroll to deliver Rose M. Litman Memorial Lecture in Science [18]

Actors train med students for real-life medical encounters[19]

Program at CU provides resources for journalists to report on water issues[20]

Planning seeks feedback to make West Main Street safer for pedestrians[21]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/video-first-generation-student-cancer-researcher-cu-anschutz[2] https://lovecolorado.com/stories/i-love-people-are-always-willing-help[3] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/regents-recognize-exceptional-individuals-annual-awards[4] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/we-are-capable-far-more-we-imagined-students-learn-their-residency-destinations-match-day[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/chatgpt-edu-access-delayed-students[6] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/proposal-collective-bargaining-delayed[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/last-call-entries-2026-cu-innovation-efficiency-awards[8] https://www.cu.edu/controller/i-e-awards/cu-innovation-efficiency-awards-2026-current-submissions[9] https://www.cu.edu/controller/forms/2026-cu-innovation-efficiency-awards-submission-form[10] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-boulder-launches-campuswide-visioning-process-future-online-education[11]

https://connections.cu.edu/stories/new-carnegie-seal-implemented-r2-designation-and-use[12] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/colorado-high-school-students-are-earning-college-credits-early-and-saving-thousands[13] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/federal-update-government-funding-ucar-lawsuit-more[14] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-32026[15] https://www.cu.edu/office-government-relations/federal-relations/federal-updates-and-actions[16] https://connections.cu.edu/people/picton-named-chair-cu-anschutz-department-anesthesiology[17] https://connections.cu.edu/people/silvey-lead-communications-and-marketing-uccs[18] https://connections.cu.edu/people/carroll-deliver-rose-m-litman-memorial-lecture-science[19] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/actors-train-med-students-real-life-medical-encounters[20] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/program-cu-provides-resources-journalists-report-water-issues[21] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/planning-seeks-feedback-make-west-main-street-safer-pedestrians