Thomas Jefferson Awards honor advancement of higher education and society[1]

The University of Colorado has announced two recipients of the 2025 Thomas Jefferson Award, one of the university's highest honors. The award recognizes members of the CU community who exemplify the ideals of Thomas Jefferson, including a commitment to educational excellence, broad interests, civic responsibility and the welfare of individuals.

This year's honorees are **Hannah Wilks**, assistant dean of students at CU Boulder, and **Wesley Marshall**, professor of Civil Engineering and Urban and Regional Planning at CU Denver.

Hannah Wilks

For more than 17 years at CU Boulder, Wilks has built a career devoted to advancing equity and ensuring that the university community has access to essential resources. Her leadership spans multiple roles on the Boulder campus, including in the Women's Resource Center, Volunteer Resource Center, Student Outreach, Advocacy and Support, and now as the assistant dean of students. In each position, she has worked to remove systemic barriers and create a more inclusive, compassionate environment for students, staff and faculty.

Wilks is best known for founding and directing CU Boulder's Basic Needs Center, the first office of its kind on campus and a model for the state. Through programs such as the Buff Pantry and Mobile Food Pantry, the center has provided hundreds of thousands of meals and reduced food insecurity for thousands. Her initiatives not only address urgent needs but also foster dignity, community and long-term solutions. By cultivating over 150 partnerships with local, national and international organizations, and state agencies, she has positioned the university as a leader in collaborative approaches to social welfare.

Her service extends beyond CU Boulder through board membership on the Colorado Agricultural Development Authority, with appointments by Gov. Polis and former Gov. Hickenlooper, and the Colorado Higher Education Basic Needs Coalition, which she co-founded and has chaired to advance essential needs work across the state in all post-secondary institutions. Wilks' work reflects the Jeffersonian ideal of civic responsibility, combining leadership, public service and a commitment to the welfare of individuals.

Wilks will be recognized at a reception set for 3-4 p.m. Sept. 26 in the Flatirons Room at the Center for Community, CU Boulder.

Wesley Marshall

Marshall joined CU Denver's College of Engineering, Design and Computing in 2009 and has since become a leading voice in reimagining transportation systems. A professor of Civil Engineering with a joint appointment in Urban and Regional Planning, he serves as associate chair of the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction and directs CU Denver's Transportation Research Center and the Human-Centered Transportation program. His work bridges technical expertise with civic responsibility, aligning closely with Jeffersonian ideals.

His research examines how community design influences safety, sustainability and health. With more than 100 peer-reviewed publications and over $6 million in funding, Marshall has brought national and international attention to CU Denver. His scholarship has been featured in outlets such as The Atlantic, NPR's Science Friday and The Washington Post, underscoring his ability to connect rigorous academic inquiry with public dialogue. His 2024 book, "Killed by a Traffic Engineer," further demonstrates his broad intellectual reach, blending research, cultural critique and humor to make transportation policy accessible to all.

Marshall is equally dedicated to teaching and mentorship. A recipient of CU Denver's Outstanding Faculty in Research Award and a three-time recipient of the College of Engineering's Outstanding Faculty in Teaching Award, he has guided students into academic careers, government service and leadership positions in industry. He also has championed diversity in the engineering profession, securing federal Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) funding to support graduate students from underrepresented groups. Through his leadership, CU Denver has

become a hub for training transportation professionals who prioritize human well-being and equity.

He completed his undergraduate education at the University of Virginia, founded by Jefferson. Marshall learned and witnessed Jeffersonian ideals daily during his four years of study there, an experience he carries with him throughout his work today.

Marshall will be recognized at a reception set for 4-5 p.m. Oct. 2 in the Terrace Room at Lawrence Street Center, CU Denver.

The Thomas Jefferson Award[2] is presented annually across the CU system to faculty, staff and/or students whose achievements embody Jefferson's ideals and contribute to the advancement of higher education and society. Award winners – who are selected by a committee of CU faculty, staff and students – receive an engraved plaque and a $2,000 honorarium.

This year's deadline for nomination submissions is Dec. 8. Please visit https://www.cu.edu/oaa/recognitions/thomas-jefferson-award[2] for award details. Questions? Please contact academicaffairs@cu.edu[3].

The people behind the mission: New demographic report released[4]

A recently released annual report details how CU serves and supports all communities of Colorado. The 2024-25 demographic report features data that shows a student body that is evolving just as Colorado's demographics are also changing. The faculty and staff communities also are changing, just at a slower pace.

The comprehensive report provides a 10-year look back at various student, staff and faculty demographics with data insights through fall 2024. Student census for the fall 2025 semester will be presented to the CU Board of Regents at their upcoming meeting on Sept. 18[5].

For more detailed information, the full report is available on the CU Office of Collaboration website.[6]

Conference on accessible media, web and tech offers 5% discount to CU community[7]

Members of the CU community are offered discounted registration for the 2025 Accessing Higher Ground: Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference[8], which is set for Nov. 17-21 at the Hilton Denver City Center.

This year's event includes over 42 virtual and 110 onsite sessions on topics such as accessible documents, PDFs, video, Canvas pages and alternative format.

Accessing Higher Ground[8] also addresses legal and policy issues, including ADA and 508 compliance; and campus accommodation, universal design and curriculum accessibility. The conference is relevant for IT and media professionals, course designers and faculty.

Deadline for early registration is Sept. 27. Click here[9] for pricing and registration.

CU campus affiliates who use their campus email address receive a 5% discount off registration fees. Members of the CU Boulder community, which is an AHEAD (Association on Higher Education and Disability) institutional member, receive a 10% discount.

Keynote speaker Mia Ives-Rublee is the senior director for the Disability Justice Initiative at American Progress. She

previously advocated for disability justice and inclusion at nonprofit organizations and businesses across the United States. She has worked with Women's March, Families Belong Together, DC Action Lab and numerous other progressive organizations. She will talk about Title II of the ADA regulations, taking effect in 2026, and the attitude of the current administration toward disability and accessibility.

Session topics include:
One-day Accessibility Testing Workshop (2025 update)[10], Karl Groves, Accessibility Consultant, AFixt (one-day workshop) Create accessible documents in Office 365: Word, PowerPoint and Excel (2025)[11], George Joeckel, Online Training Program Manager, Utah State University / WebAIM, (one-day certificate) Introduction to the Screen Reader Ropes Course: Demystifying Screen Reader Use for Manual Testing[12]**,** Deneb Pulsipher, Captain Accessible, SeaMonster Studios
Main Conference

Accessibility testing for everyone – getting started[13], Becky Gibson, Lead Accessibility Specialist, UKG

Planning and Creating Accessible documents, media and other digital material[14], Craig Boassaly, President, Eliquo Training & Development Incorporated

AI and Digital Accessibility: The Good, The Bad, The Hopeful[15], Aaron Arvig, Digital Accessibility Coordinator, State of Minnesota

When Access Needs Collide: An Interactive Discussion on Navigating Inclusive Classroom Practices[16], Deanna Ferrante, Executive Accessibility Project Manager, Macmillan Learning

From Commitment to Continuity: Advancing a Holistic Digital Accessibility Plan in Higher Education to Meet Title II Compliance[17], Binky Lush, Manager, Discovery, Access and Web Services, Penn State University Libraries

See the full five-day agenda here[18] or register now[19].

Conference site: https://accessinghigherground.org/[8]

Questions: Contact Howard Kramer, 720-351-8668, or hkramer@ahead.org[20].

Strategic Planning leaders to engage with governance groups[21]

The Strategic Planning Working Group continues to make progress on the development of CU's Strategic Plan 2.0, having recently completed its second meeting and soon embarking on conversations with members of the CU community.

To ensure broad, meaningful engagement across the CU system, Strategic Planning Co-Chairs Lynn Vidler, provost at UCCS, and Chad Marturano, vice president and chief financial officer for the CU system, will be attending several governance group leadership meetings throughout the 2025-26 academic year to dialogue with faculty, staff and students. The conversations will be essential in shaping a strategic direction that reflects the values and aspirations of the entire community.

The working group also is developing an interactive engagement tool that will be available on the Strategic Planning website[22] later this fall. This tool will allow CU community members to share feedback, explore emerging themes and stay informed as the process evolves.

The Strategic Planning Working Group[23] consists of faculty, staff and administrators from all four campuses and CU system administration. The systemwide group is tasked with developing a plan that will align with CU's mission and vision and guide the university's growth and success in the years ahead.

A draft plan is due to President Todd Saliman by June 2026. The final Strategic Plan 2.0 will be presented to the Board of Regents in summer 2026. CU's inaugural 2021-26 Strategic Plan remains the university's guiding document through June 2026.

To provide feedback or learn more about the strategic planning process, please visit the CU Strategic Plan 2.0 website [22].

If you have questions, please contact CUStratPlan@cu.edu[24].

CU campuses receive high marks for free speech[25]

In a new assessment of free-speech climate on college campuses, the University of Colorado Boulder ranks fifth nationally and is the top-ranked school in the state. The University of Colorado Denver's national ranking of 77 is second-best in Colorado.

Released Tuesday, the sixth annual College Free Speech Rankings[26] from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) and survey partner College Pulse are based on a survey of more than 68,000 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities.

CU Boulder, which holds a "green light" rating in FIRE's Spotlight database, was lauded for adopting a statement on institutional neutrality. FIRE also credited the CU Board of Regents' affirmation of the pro-free speech Chicago Statement[27], which applies to all CU campuses.

For more information, see the rankings at https://www.thefire.org/college-free-speech-rankings[26].

Physicists have created a new 'time crystal' – it won't power a time machine but could have many other uses [28]

The side effects of helping: Correctional health care professionals face burnout and trauma [29]

CU Denver, UNC explore how to align more courses toward Colorado's quantum future [30]

Next wave of CU Anschutz marketing campaign hits the high notes [31]

Federal transition update: Space Command Relocation, more[32]

From Sept. 5, this update from CU Federal Relations and Counsel includes information on Space Command

Relocation, In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students Lawsuit, Harvard Funding Freeze Ruled Illegal, Ruling on Pocket Rescissions, and OCR DPS Investigation.

Click here to read the post.[33]

For the latest communications and federal memos, please visit the CU System Federal Transitions Updates[34] page.

Persad named 2025 NAM Greenwall Fellow [35]

Silva honored with Golden Stethoscope Preceptorship Award [36]

In memoriam: James B. Wolf [37]

James B. “Jim” Wolf, a founding professor at CU Denver and University Medal recipient, died Aug. 23, 2025. He was 92.

A history professor, Wolf arrived at CU Denver in 1968, teaching and conducting research on aspects of imperialism in Africa and emigration from Ireland.

Active in shared governance at the university, Wolf served as chair of the CU Denver Faculty Assembly and chair of the systemwide Faculty Council. After retiring in 1999, he also served as president of the systemwide CU Retired Faculty Association.

Among the many honors he received: the CU President’s University Service Award and a University Medal from the Board of Regents.

Read more on the life of Jim Wolf here.[38]

A Weekly Workout to Protect Your Knees[39]

CU Denver just opened an easier path to college for thousands of Denver students[40]

Robotic jellyfish: CU Boulder lab seeks to use jellyfish for ocean exploration[41]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/thomas-jefferson-awards-honor-advancement-higher-education-and-society[2] https://www.cu.edu/oaa/recognitions/thomas-jefferson-award[3] mailto:academicaffairs@cu.edu[4] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/people-behind-mission-new-demographic-report-released[5] https://regents.cu.edu/events/2025/09/18/board-regents-regular-meeting-september-18-19-2025[6] https://www.cu.edu/collaboration/demographics-report[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/conference-accessible-media-web-and-tech-offers-5-discount-cu-community[8] https://accessinghigherground.org/[9] https://accessinghigherground.org/pricing-2025/[10] https://accessinghigherground.org/1-day-accessibility-testing-workshop-2025-update/[11] https://accessinghigherground.org/create-accessible-documents-in-office-365-word-powerpoint-and-excel-2025/[12] https://accessinghigherground.org/introduction-to-the-screen-reader-ropes-course-demystifying-screen-reader-use-for-manual-testing-precon/[13] https://accessinghigherground.org/accessibility-testing-for-everyone-getting-started/[14] https://accessinghigherground.org/planning-creating-accessible-digital-communications-assets-revision/[15] https://accessinghigherground.org/ai-and-digital-accessibility-the-good-the-bad-the-hopeful/[16] https://accessinghigherground.org/when-access-needs-collide-an-interactive-discussion-on-navigating-inclusive-classroom-practices/[17] https://accessinghigherground.org/from-commitment-to-continuity-advancing-a-holistic-digital-accessibility-plan-in-higher-education/[18] https://accessinghigherground.org/schedule-2025/#cs_2025-11-19[19] https://cvent.me/Ava9MW[20] https://connections.cu.edu/blank[21] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/strategic-planning-leaders-engage-governance-groups[22] https://www.cu.edu/strategic-planning/[23] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/members-strategic-planning-working-group-announced[24] mailto:CUStratPlan@cu.edu[25] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-campuses-receive-high-marks-free-speech[26] https://www.thefire.org/college-free-speech-rankings[27] https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/adopting-chicago-statement[28] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/physicists-have-created-new-time-crystal-it-won-t-power-time-machine-could-have-many-other[29] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/side-effects-helping-correctional-health-care-professionals-face-burnout-and-trauma[30] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-denver-unc-explore-how-align-more-courses-toward-colorado-s-quantum-future[31] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/next-wave-cu-anschutz-marketing-campaign-hits-high-notes[32] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/federal-transition-update-space-command-relocation-more[33] https://www.cu.edu/blog/government-relations/federal-government-update-9525[34] https://www.cu.edu/federal-transition-updates[35] https://connections.cu.edu/people/persad-named-2025-nam-greenwall-fellow[36] https://connections.cu.edu/people/silva-honored-golden-stethoscope-preceptorship-award[37] https://connections.cu.edu/people/memoriam-james-b-wolf[38] https://www.dailycamera.com/obituaries/james-jim-wolf/[39] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/weekly-workout-protect-your-knees[40] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/cu-denver-just-opened-easier-path-college-thousands-denver-students[41] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/robotic-jellyfish-cu-boulder-lab-seeks-use-jellyfish-ocean-exploration