



Announcing Dr. Randall McEntaffer as Dean of the College of Natural Sciences

📅 April 20, 2026

👤 Amy Parsons, President

👤 Lise M. Youngblade, Interim Provost & Executive Vice President

Dear Colleagues:

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Dr. Randall McEntaffer as the next Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, effective July 1, 2026.

Dr. McEntaffer joins us from The Pennsylvania State University, where he currently serves as Department Head and Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics in the Eberly College of Sciences, with joint appointments in Physics and Materials Science and Engineering. He is a distinguished researcher and administrator with a proven record of accomplishment for driving innovation, fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, leading with a collaborative spirit, and having a passion for educating the next generation of scientists.

Dr. McEntaffer earned his Ph.D. in Astrophysics from the University of Colorado, Boulder, making this a homecoming of sorts. His research focuses on the design, fabrication, and implementation of X-ray optics for space-based spectrometers, involving collaborations with NASA, and he brings a wealth of experience in nanotechnology and materials science. Currently, he is a leader in high-resolution soft X-ray spectroscopy research and a strong proponent of interdisciplinary science, bridging astrophysics, optics, and engineering.

Dr. McEntaffer is the ideal visionary leader to propel Colorado State University and the College of Natural Sciences into an exciting future. At Penn State, he has demonstrated leadership in both research and education, leading high-visibility NASA technology

development efforts and earning honors such as the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Dr. McEntaffer is also deeply committed to inclusive excellence, leading outreach programs designed to provide STEM research opportunities to underrepresented students.

He was named a Penn State Teaching and Learning with Technology Faculty Fellow in 2020, for which he led a team to incorporate virtual-reality-based lessons into introductory astronomy courses at Penn State. His awards and honors also include being named a University of Iowa Scholar of the Year in 2015, a National Academy of Sciences Kavli Fellow in 2014, and a NASA Nancy Grace Roman Technology Fellow in 2011.

We extend a special thank you to Dr. Jacob Roberts, who has provided outstanding leadership as interim CNS dean since Oct. 2024. Dr. Roberts will continue to serve in this role until Dr. McEntaffer's arrival. We also express our gratitude to search committee chair Kjerstin Thorson, professor and dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the entire search committee for leading a highly competitive national search. Finally, our appreciation to the CSU community for your active engagement and valuable feedback in this process.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. McEntaffer back to Colorado and into our Ram community!

Sincerely,

Amy Parsons
President

Lise M. Youngblade
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

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