



CSU Names Six New University Distinguished Professors

📅 April 1, 2026

👤 Amy Parsons, President

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

Dear Colleagues:

We are pleased to announce the appointment of this year's cohort of University Distinguished Professors. We have the distinct pleasure of recognizing six exceptional faculty members for their extraordinary achievements in research, education, and service with the highest honor accorded to a tenured professor at Colorado State University.

The significant number of recipients this year speaks volumes about the incredible caliber of research and teaching, scholarly accomplishment, and creative works currently emerging from CSU. Here is the 2026 cohort of University Distinguished Professors:

Joel Bacon, Ph.D.

| School of Music, Theatre and Dance, College of Liberal Arts

Preeminent music scholar, educator, and concert organist lauded for his immense impact in the field of music and for his creative work to illuminate the intersection of musicology, theology, and performance. Dr. Bacon holds the Stewart and Sharon Golden Chair of Organ and Liturgical Studies and the Fr. Don Willette Chair of Catholic Studies. His research includes the history and performance of Gregorian chant and the role of music in religious and community life.

Francesca Cotrufo, Ph.D.

| Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, College of Agricultural Sciences

Internationally recognized as the leading global expert on soil organic matter formation and stabilization. In particular, Dr. Cotrufo has been recognized for advancing understanding of the global carbon cycle and applying her expertise to create an evidence-based framework for managing soils to sequester carbon for climate change mitigation. She has become the go-to expert for industry, NGOs, and policymakers as soil carbon markets and related technologies have developed.

Steven Dow, Ph.D.

| Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Distinguished member of the veterinary academy noted for his “bench-to-bedside” research addressing critical health challenges in both animals and humans. In particular, his work in immunotherapy and stem cell therapy was cited along with a research portfolio marked by exceptional originality and translational relevance in harnessing the immune system to treat disease. He was cited for a career reflecting a rare combination of scientific rigor, clinical acumen, educational leadership, and mentorship excellence.

Charles Henry, Ph.D.

| Department of Chemistry, College of Natural Sciences

Remarkable contributions in the disciplines of analytical chemistry and biological and chemical engineering. Dr. Henry has had broad impact as an internationally recognized leader in paper-based microfluidics. In particular, his work to integrate electrochemistry, microfluidics, and molecular separations to develop novel techniques for paper and microfabricated devices in the fields of chemistry, health, and environmental sciences was cited in addition to his success at transitioning his research into entrepreneurial activities.

Anireddy Reddy, Ph.D.

| Department of Biology, College of Natural Sciences

An internationally recognized plant molecular geneticist specializing in plant molecular biology, signal transduction, and genetic engineering for crop improvement. Across a career spanning more than three decades at Colorado State University, Dr. Reddy has maintained an exceptional record of scholarly productivity and has become one of the most influential researchers globally in molecular genetics, plant signaling, and computational biology.

Melinda Smith, Ph.D.**| Department of Biology, College of Natural Sciences**

An internationally respected plant community/ecosystem ecologist working to elucidate the impact of global change on ecosystem sustainability. In particular, her work to advance understanding of the impacts global change drivers pose for grassland communities and ecosystems on several continents was cited. Her projects reflect a worldwide investigation of field sites, ranging from the grasslands in North America (including Colorado's shortgrass prairie) to South Africa and China.

The review of nominations and the selection of new UDPs are the privilege of the active and emeritus UDPs, and appointments are made by the Provost and Executive Vice President with approval by the President. This larger than usual selection of new distinguished professors signals tremendous institutional health in our academic and research enterprises and the maturation of a talented cohort of faculty. A special SOURCE article will be published featuring more on the six recipients.

Please join us in congratulating our newest University Distinguished Professors on this significant career achievement.

Sincerely,
Amy Parsons
President

Lise M. Youngblade
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

Colleges:

- Agricultural Sciences
- Business
- Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering
- Health and Human Sciences
- Liberal Arts
- Warner College of Natural Resources
- Natural Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Schools & Programs:

- Graduate School
- International Programs
- Online Degrees and Courses
- School of Materials Science and Engineering
- School of Music, Theatre and Dance
- School of Biomedical Engineering
- School of Education
- School of Global Environmental Sustainability
- School of Social Work
- School of Public Health

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