



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 12, 2025

Message from the Provost & Executive Vice President



Dear Colleagues:

I have spent my more than 30-year career in higher education learning by listening to the ideas, thoughts, and concerns of others. Every step of the way, learning by listening has made me a better colleague and leader especially when the conversations have been tough, the stakes high, and the subject matter complex.

That was the case at two recent meetings regarding federal actions by the new administration, its attempts to dismantle DEI, and funding impacts on higher education. The first meeting was a special open forum hosted by the Executive Committee of Faculty Council at the end of February, which included a panel of several members of CSU executive leadership. The second was at a coffee I hosted with my team and about 15 faculty members just a few days later as a follow-up meeting to the open forum.

In both cases, I appreciated the opportunity to hear faculty members' concerns and address their questions. As a result of the feedback we received, my team is putting together a plan for more direct faculty engagement through the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President to discuss the federal impacts and other matters.

I am proud of the fact our university has stood up an Incident Management Team to help mitigate impacts from policy shifts, much like CSU did during the pandemic to preserve the integrity of our mission. The IMT includes several subgroups who are composed of and consult with area experts from across the university. The subgroups include academic impacts, financial impacts, our land-grant mission, human resources, and research and sponsored activity.

- At the Faculty Council open forum, President Parsons noted that no one in our community is unaffected by what is happening out of Washington, just as no institution of higher education is untouched. She also made the point that Colorado State University has been here more than 150 years, and we have the benefit of being a land-grant institution to help get us through this difficult time. CSU has a very solid mission of access to excellence for our students regardless of background, and we have to stay centered on our mission in times like this.

As we respond to federal changes, we must also continue to plan for our future. At the regular March meeting of Faculty Council, President Parsons and I introduced an initial draft of a Strategic Roadmap for CSU 2035. This new Strategic Roadmap is a framework designed to align President Parson's top five institutional priorities with the CSU System's Strategic Overview and Strategic Priorities, as well as with other prior strategic plans (i.e., the Courageous Strategic Transformation and the Academic Master Plan).

The goal of the Strategic Roadmap is to be clear about our university-level strategy, what university initiatives we will prioritize, how these initiatives will make CSU distinctive in a competitive marketplace, and what metrics we will use to measure our success. We will be inviting broad input from our community and will soon announce dates for two town halls to be held later in the spring.

Please know how much gratitude I have for all you do to support our mission as we navigate the present and prepare for the future. I offer you the same challenge I give to myself in times such as these: Let's respond by being kinder and calmer with each other; let's speak up and share opinions respectfully but also trust that we are all doing the best we can; and let's lean into taking care of ourselves so we can take care of our community.

Sincerely,
Marion

Connect with the Provost & EVP: [LinkedIn – Marion Underwood](#)

Updates Regarding Federal Administrative Actions

CSU leadership and the Office of General Counsel are closely monitoring the rapidly changing federal landscape, including executive orders and memos issued by the White House, court challenges, and other actions, and analyzing possible impacts to our university community. The following webpages were launched to provide updates and pertinent information:

- [Updates on Federal Actions](#)
- [Federal Updates Impacting Research](#)

CSU will remain steadfast in its core principles and foundational commitment as Colorado's land-grant university to provide access to a world-class education to anyone who seeks to study here.

CSU advances in FirstGen Forward Network

CSU is the first university in Colorado to be invited to advance to the Network Champion phase of the FirstGen Forward Network, which engages and empowers higher education institutions to transform support for holistic first-generation student success. As a Network Champion, CSU will serve as a national leader in advancing first-generation efforts and will contribute to an important knowledge base on evidence-based practices, leadership engagement, and scaling supports.

[Learn more about the FirstGen Forward Network.](#)

**FirstGen
FORWARD**
Network Member



**FirstGen
FORWARD**
Network Leader



Faculty Success

Faculty search chair training

Registration is open for faculty search chair training, facilitated by Faculty Success and Human Resources Talent Acquisition. The training is required for all new faculty search chairs and those who last completed a search chair training eight or more years ago.

[Search chair training information and registration.](#)

EnCircle celebrates 7 years of faculty mentorship

2025 marks the seventh year of the EnCircle program, a campus-wide mentoring network designed to facilitate peer mentorship across discipline, rank, role, and appointment type. Nearly 300 CSU faculty members have participated, with EnCircle participants reporting significant improvements in their sense of community, belonging, and satisfaction with work-life balance. Registration for the Fall 2025 EnCircle session will open in late spring.

[More information on EnCircle.](#)

Student Success

Front Range-CSU transfer program accepting applications

Applications are open for [Rams Transfer Academy \(RTA\)](#), a unique Front Range Community College-CSU transfer student initiative focused on increasing the enrollment, retention, and completion of first-generation, low-to-moderate income, and rural students intending to pursue a bachelor's degree at CSU. RTA creates seamless transfer without loss of academic credits, putting students on track to graduate with their bachelor's within five years.

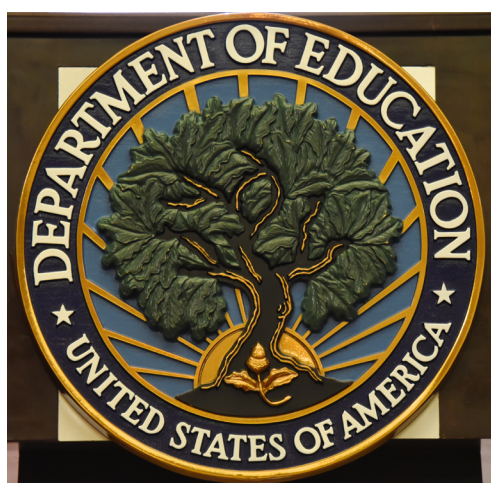
Spur Start program incorporates existing student success efforts

The exciting new [Spur Start program](#) will allow students in the Denver metro area to live at home during their first year of college. Spur Start is being built using long-standing student success practices, such as Summer Bridge and Key Communities, and will welcome students to the program this summer.

- A [story centering on the experience of a Key mentor](#) was recently published in the CSU System STATE Magazine.

Announcements

- **Volunteer with MURALS** – On March 28, undergraduate students will showcase their rigorous scholarly work at the 2025 MURALS research and artistry symposium. Please consider volunteering as a [faculty guide for MURALS students, as a poster judge](#), or as [day-of event support](#).
- **Artificial Intelligence Workshop Series** – TILT is hosting a spring Generative AI workshop series designed to help faculty navigate the opportunities and challenges of AI in higher education. This hybrid, interactive series will feature discussions led by TILT staff and CSU community members, focusing on practical considerations and approaches for using AI in teaching and learning. [See workshops, dates, and more](#).
- **Master Teacher Initiative (MTI) Speaker Series** – Join TILT throughout the spring semester for the [MTI 20-Year Celebration Speaker Series](#). A continuation of the MTI 20-year celebration event, the five guest speakers bring fresh perspectives and highlight innovative teaching strategies and trends in higher education, offering valuable insights to enhance teaching across the university. Sessions will explore topics such as how experience shapes learning, fostering connection in the classroom, and reflections on the history and impact of MTI – along with a look at what’s ahead.
- **TILT Annual Summer Conference** – [TILT’s 2025 Summer Conference](#) is May 21-22. Free for all instructors across campus, this year’s theme is *Engaging Students through Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*. Keynote speaker Lillian Nave (Appalachian State University and *Think UDL* podcast host) will lead an interactive workshop on UDL strategies to support neurodivergent learners. The conference features a variety of workshops, panels, and discussions designed to provide practical teaching strategies for all educators.
- **Curator’s Tour at Avenir Museum** – Enjoy an [exclusive tour](#) of the Avenir Museum’s *Tiger’s Leap: Fashion Past, Present, Future* with Curator Paula Alaszkiwicz on April 16.



Maryland GovPics, CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Higher Education News

The federal impacts continue to dominate news about higher education, including the Trump administration’s intent to dismantle the Department of Education. We recommend several readings below on the subject:

The Hill published an article on March 8 titled, [“Advocates gear up for fight to preserve Education Department.”](#) Last week the Senate confirmed Linda McMahon as the new Education secretary, and President Donald Trump said he wants McMahon to “put herself out of a job” and close the Department of Education. Eliminating the department would likely require an act of Congress, and many lawmakers and other advocates for the department vow a fight.

The Chronicle of Higher Education reported Friday on the other big news related to higher ed that ended the week: [“Trump Administration Says It’s Pulling \\$400 Million of Federal Funding From Columbia U.”](#) An excerpt from the article reads, “The move

came just four days after three federal agencies – the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and Education – announced a review of \$5 billion in federal contracts and grants held by Columbia. The funding review is being led by the Joint Task Force to Combat Antisemitism, created by President Trump shortly after he took office.”

The Chronicle also publishes a [DEI Tracker](#). Here’s an excerpt from their website: “The Chronicle is tracking higher ed’s dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. As colleges make changes in response to anti-DEI legislation and mounting political pressure, an inconsistent and confusing landscape has emerged. The pace of change ramped up in 2025, as the Trump administration signaled a desire to eliminate DEI efforts across the government and private sectors, including in colleges.”

Points of Pride

- The **Agricultural Literacy Program’s Ag Adventure** at the [National Western Stock Show](#) engaged 30,325 participants, with impactful highlights including Cam’s Classroom, the Junior Ag Ambassador program, and facilitation by 32 College of Agricultural Sciences students.
- The prestigious Responsible Research in Business Management Working Board has invited College of Business **Dean Beth Walker** to serve as a member, a testament to her research excellence and leadership of the [globally recognized college](#). The group’s focus is encouraging and enabling research practices for business schools to contribute credible and useful knowledge for a better world.
- The Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency have awarded [\\$326 million to three CSU research projects](#) within the **Energy Institute** and **Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering** that aim to improve U.S. oil and gas operations and reduce methane emissions nationwide.
- **Dr. Paula Alaszkiwicz**, curator of the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, was [recognized with the Marilyn DeLong Curatorial Exhibition Excellence Award](#) by the International Textile and Apparel Association.
- The National Book Foundation recognized Associate Professor of English **Ramona Ausubel’s** novel [The Last Animal with the 2025 Science + Literature award](#), which recognizes three books annually and carries a \$10,000 award and national programming.
- Geosciences Associate Professor **Dr. Sean Gallen’s** research lab has made headlines with two impactful papers illuminating the landscape evolution of Colorado’s Rocky Mountains. One paper is the [cover story of January’s widely read GSA Today](#) and the other [received attention in Scientific American](#).
- **Dr. Kristen Buchanan** has been named the chair of the Department of Physics.
- At the **College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences’ 26th annual Research Day**, 177 undergraduate, graduate, and DVM students and postdoctoral fellows presented posters or oral presentations. The highly coveted Golden Pipette Award, granted to the department with the highest presentation scores, was awarded to Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology (MIP) this year. The Green Pipette Award, which recognizes commitment to sustainability, was also awarded to MIP.
- The **Graduate Center for Inclusive Mentoring (GCIM)** celebrated 22 faculty members who completed the GCIM Mentor Well certificate, demonstrating their commitment to our mentoring community.
- **Dr. Kate Wilsterman** (assistant professor, Dept. of Biology) [received the 2025 George A. Bartholomew Award](#) from The Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology.
- The Graduate School recently opened [GradSpace, the first dedicated area for CSU graduate students and postdoctoral scholars](#) to connect, collaborate, and recharge. Located in the General Services Building, Suite 203, **GradSpace** supports student success by fostering community and providing a hub for working, socializing, and building a sense of belonging.
- Congratulations to **Drs. Rushika Perera, Carolina Mehaffy, Nicole Kelp, and Brendan Podell** (Dept. Of Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology) on their outstanding mentorship to Kaitlyn Dirks, Ashley Freedman, Hannah Gilliard, and Lea Maristela in their achievement of CSU’s [Mentored Research and Artistry Distinction](#) in Fall 2024.
- **Dr. Tom Santangelo’s** lab in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology [received a grant from NASA to research extraterrestrial life](#).
- **Dr. Stuart Cottrell** (professor, Dept. of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources) was [recognized for his paper Understanding Motivations and Expectations of Scuba Divers \(2008\)](#). Cottrell’s paper was voted the winner of the Full Research Papers category in the [journal’s 20th anniversary edition](#) highlighting favorites from its history.
- UDP of Economics **Dr. Edward Barbier delivered a lecture entitled “Sustainability and Prosperity in the Age of Ecological Scarcity” at the London School of Economics in February, as the second event in a [Sustainability public lecture series](#). Barbier is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of New Economic Thinking at the Oxford Martin School.**
- The **Department of Occupational Therapy** received notification of [full accreditation for its new Occupational Therapy Doctorate program](#). The program earned the maximum time granted for a “new” program: seven years.
- In early January, then-President Joe Biden awarded **Dr. Elizabeth Barnes** (professor, Dept. of Atmospheric Science) with the [Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers](#) – the U.S. government’s highest honor for outstanding early-career scientists and engineers. Barnes applies the use of artificial intelligence and data science tools to understand and predict Earth’s climate variability and change.
- The [U.S. News & World Report ranked the College of Business Online MBA No. 1](#) in Colorado for the eighth year in a row, and the **Online Master of Computer Information Systems No. 1** in Colorado for the seventh year in a row. **No. 1** in Colorado for veterans, and the **Online MCIS degree ranked No. 9** for veterans nationwide.
- The **Agribusiness and Food Innovation Management master’s program** at CSU Spur graduated its first cohort, with innovative ventures like precision fermentation technology, superfood ingredients, and beef lifecycle analysis, [demonstrating CSU’s role in connecting urban and rural, past and future](#).