



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 13, 2025

Message from the Provost & Executive Vice President



Dear Colleagues:

I was struck by a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, "[Emotions Are a Leadership Asset](#)." The piece argues that emotional intelligence is about using "emotional data" to foster clarity, resilience, and trust. It also says, "If you treat emotions like distractions, you're missing out on one of your most powerful leadership tools." The underlying message was that the best leaders normalize emotion at work, and emotional intelligence can make leaders more effective.

This resonates deeply with our work at CSU, where every interaction – from the classroom where we engage with our students to a meeting we attend with colleagues – has an emotional component. It reminds us that our leadership roles demand that we master both our intellectual pursuits and our emotional intelligence, especially when responding to the unique and often challenging landscape of higher education.

Each one of us at this institution is a leader in some way, shape, or form, and what we do in fulfilling CSU's mission requires both our brain power and our ability to understand, manage, and navigate our own emotions and those of others. Certainly, it is hard not to react emotionally at times to the federal proclamations, directives, and actions, including the recent compact sent to several elite private and public institutions. But our determination to move CSU forward is driven by the care we have for our students and each other, and for people in communities we have never met in places we have never been. That is part of who we are as we seek to help build a more vibrant, equitable, and sustainable world.

- A few days ago I had the privilege of meeting with faculty and staff from the College of Health and Human Sciences to discuss academic freedom. It was a thoughtful, deliberative, and honest conversation on topics like AI, DEI, social media, complaints against instructors, and students who might audio or video record in class. The room was filled with dedicated people who shared their concerns and asked a lot of difficult but fair and important questions.

I will close this message with what I said in closing to the group that day: *'Of the things I worry most about at CSU, I don't spend a lot of time worrying about how our faculty and staff teach and do their research because I know how much you deeply care about our students, and that you join me in wanting to inspire them and hold them to the highest academic standards.'*

Challenging conversations happen all the time in teaching and research, and they can be extremely hard in the moment. But I trust in your ability to navigate those conversations because at the end of the day you are trusted leaders in your classrooms, labs, and in our community. CSU and the CSU System unequivocally support academic freedom as a foundational principle for our nation's higher education system, and CSU is firmly committed to ensuring that you have the freedom to pursue rigorous scholarship and advance knowledge according to standards of excellence within your academic field.

Sincerely,
Marion

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

Call for Nominations: University Distinguished Professor, Honorary Degree

University Distinguished Professor

The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President is pleased to announce a [call for nominations for the title of University Distinguished Professor](#), the highest honor bestowed to a CSU faculty member in the areas of research and scholarship. This title is reserved for CSU faculty who have demonstrated creative excellence and made major discoveries and achievements in their field. Nominations from all University disciplines are welcomed and strongly encouraged.

Nominations are due **Friday, October 31** through the CSU InfoReady System. View the [UDP nomination instructions](#).

Honorary Degree

The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President in collaboration with the Faculty Council [invite nominations for an Honorary Degree](#) to be awarded at the University-wide commencement in May 2026. Honorary degrees awarded by CSU recognize individuals who have attained extraordinary achievements of lasting distinction and include but may not be limited to Doctor of Humane Letters and Doctor of Science.

Nominations are due to provost@colostate.edu no later than **Friday, October 24**.



Amy Taylor
Senior Director,
Accessibility Center

Leadership Updates

After a highly successful search, [Amy Taylor](#) has been appointed as the Senior Director of the new Accessibility Center. She begins her role shaping the Center and coordinating CSU's accessibility efforts on Oct. 13.

Several searches for academic leadership are currently underway. The internal search for our next [Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs](#) is scheduled to continue with semifinalist interviews Oct. 23–29. Searches for [Dean of the College of Business](#) and [Dean of the College of Natural Sciences](#) have begun, with application deadlines on Nov. 3 and Nov. 10, respectively.

All three search committees will invite community feedback on the finalists. More information on the searches, including search committees and timelines, open forums, and feedback opportunities, are available on the [Provost and Executive Vice President's website](#).

Faculty Success

Faculty Departure and Retention Study

[Faculty Success](#) partnered with the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education ([COACHE](#)) to compare CSU departures and retentions over a three-year period with a cohort of universities nationwide. The results, which were shared at the October Faculty Council meeting, revealed that:

- CSU faculty members were more often contacted by other universities rather than initiating job searches themselves,
- Only a small fraction were job searching to seek leverage to negotiate their current employment terms, and
- There were inconsistencies in CSU's retention processes, counteroffers, and employment for dual-career partners.

These results highlight the continued importance of supporting proactive and consistent faculty retention efforts.

Student Success

TRIO Still A Key Driver of Student Access and Success

The Higher Education Act of 1965 authorized the establishment of TRIO programs to aid low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and first-generation students. The [CSU TRIO programs](#), alongside the College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP), bring more than \$4M annually to support 3,300 students as they apply to, enter, and graduate from postsecondary education.

We are deeply saddened to lose funding for the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC). However, the rest of CSU's TRIO programs will continue to serve students and families from middle school through doctoral programs.

Announcements

- The CSU Sustainability Fund, sponsored by the President's Sustainability Commission, is **open for small project proposals through Oct. 31**. The fund supports grassroots sustainability efforts across the university. Funding can be requested by students, staff, and/or faculty members at any level up to \$10,000 in one-time funding. Interdisciplinary proposals are encouraged. [Apply on the Sustainability website](#).
- All CSU instructors are invited to apply to [TILT's new Course Design Institute](#): a five-day, fully virtual program occurring Jan. 12–16, 2026. This intensive program provides expert guidance, structured time, and feedback to help participants design or redesign a course with a deliberate focus on student engagement and meaningful learning outcomes. Join the [virtual information session](#) Oct. 20 to learn more. **Applications are due Oct. 31**.
- The [full schedule is now available for The Symposium](#), hosted Nov. 3–6 by the Office for Inclusive Excellence. The Symposium features an interactive platform called RingCentral, through which attendees can engage with others at the virtual conference in addition to attending concurrent workshops. The Symposium also offers a student-specific track curated to meet student interests.
- [Sign up for the 45th annual Homecoming 5K](#) taking place **Saturday, Oct. 18** at 8 a.m. on The Oval, led by the Department of Health and Exercise Science.
- The [Electronic Accessibility Rubric](#), which provides detailed information for employees on how to meet electronic accessibility standards, **has been updated**. Additionally, the Assistive Technology Resource Center released an [electronic accessibility overview presentation for faculty](#), covering accessibility laws, faculty expectations, available tools and how to use them, and more.

Homecoming and Family Weekend: Oct. 16–18

CSU is excited to welcome alumni and Rams fans back to campus to engage with faculty, staff, and current students for Homecoming and Family Weekend, Oct. 16–18.

The festivities will include the Distinguished Alumni Awards on Thursday, Oct. 16, followed by the Festival on The Oval on Friday, Oct. 17. The Homecoming 5K Race will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 18, followed by the Ram Walk Tailgate at 1 p.m. Also on Saturday, the Rams' home game against Hawaii at Canvas Stadium kicks off at 5 p.m.

Visit the [CSU Homecoming and Family Weekend website](#) for a schedule of events.



Higher Education News

Here are a few higher education news articles recommended for your reading list:

Inside Higher Ed published a guest column by CSU Associate Provost Steven Dandaneau on Oct. 8 titled, [“Stop Labeling Students ‘First-Gen’: We shouldn’t be foisting the label on individual students – but that doesn’t mean we can’t do more to make campuses more broadly accessible and just.”](#) Dr. Dandaneau is a student success expert, and he elevates CSU's profile nationally in his role as Executive Director of the Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities ([UERU](#)).

The Wall Street Journal published an article on Oct. 10 titled, [“MIT Rejects Trump’s Sweeping ‘Compact’ Offering Colleges Funding Advantages: The school became the first university to reject the terms, saying they would undermine independence.”](#) The Massachusetts Institute of Technology became the first in a group of nine universities to reject the compact from the Trump administration offering colleges funding advantages if they imposed far-reaching campus reforms, according to the WSJ. The report cites a letter to

Education Secretary Linda McMahon from MIT President Sally Kornbluth in which MIT claimed the proposal – called the “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education” – would restrict freedom of expression and MIT's independence. The Trump administration has given the universities an Oct. 20 deadline to respond to the compact offer.

The New York Times published an article on Oct. 9 titled, [“Harvard Seeks Assurances as Talks Restart in Washington: University leaders are wary of a new proposal from the Trump administration to impose far-reaching changes in higher education.”](#) The article focuses on talks resuming between Harvard University and the Trump administration over the president's attempt to bring the nation's oldest university to heel. According to the report, which cites two unnamed sources, Harvard officials have discussed internally the possibility of seeking additional assurances from the administration that the university will not be subject to further demands once an agreement has been signed.

The Chronicle of Higher Education published an article on Oct. 8 titled, [“Private Colleges Are Pitching Free Tuition for Middle-Class Students. Will It Make a Difference?”](#) The article looks at enrollment and recruitment strategies by Emory University and other colleges that include free tuition for families earning under a given threshold, along with other incentives. The goal is to mitigate concerns about college debt and affordability and to counter an anticipated enrollment cliff due to a decline in the number of traditional-age college students.

Points of Pride

- The Botanical Dietary Supplements Translational Research Team, led at CSU by co-PIs Dr. Tiffany Weir (CHHS), Dr. Jessica Prenni (CAS), and Dr. Kelly Wrighton (CAS), received a [more than \\$6 million NIH CARBON Program grant](#).
- Dr. Tom Dean (Management) earned a [2025 Best Reviewer Award](#) for his work on *Academy of Management Perspectives*, a leading management journal.
- Dr. Pinar Omur-Ozbek (Civil & Environmental Engineering) was named a [2025 Engineering Unleashed Fellow](#). Fellowships are awarded through peer selection to visionary educators who are revolutionizing how instructors prepare tomorrow's engineers.
- A new statewide Colorado System of Care Workforce Capacity Center will be housed in the School of Social Work. This multimillion-dollar project will improve services to youth and families.
- Dr. Nicole Archambeau (History) collaborated with Dr. John Mola (Forest & Rangeland Stewardship) and the Butterfly Pavilion on a now-open exhibition about bees in Colorado called [“Beyond the Hive: Discovering Colorado's Bees.”](#)
- As the newly appointed Director of CSU's Global Biodiversity Center, Dr. Eduardo Gallo-Cajiao (Human Dimensions of Natural Resources) will guide the [re-launch of the Center with a new strategic vision](#).
- Marina Rodriguez (Ph.D. student, Biology) [published a paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) describing species adaptation to climate change, specifically the yellow warbler.
- Dr. Doug Thamm (Clinical Sciences), Director of Clinical Research at the Flint Animal Cancer Center, was awarded the [Stuart Presidential Chair in Oncology](#). Dr. Thamm has authored nearly 200 peer-reviewed publications and has won multiple awards.
- CSU will receive a Council of Graduate Schools grant to participate in the Creating Learning Environments for Advancing Researchers (CLEAR) initiative, a multi-institutional project evaluating the effect of clearly communicated requirements on outcomes for Ph.D. students in STEM. The Graduate School aims to strengthen transparency while honoring program autonomy to support student success.
- The [Graduate School launched an online orientation](#) in Canvas this fall, providing Residential Instruction graduate students with a self-paced guide to essential resources and requirements. 1,200 students (~33% of RI graduate students) have logged into the course.
- CVMBS' Animal Population Health Institute (APHI) earned a renewed designation as an [FAO Reference Centre](#) for animal health, reflecting APHI's global leadership. The work of Drs. Mo Salman and Sangeeta Rao (Clinical Sciences) was crucial to receiving this designation.
- Dr. Melinda Smith, professor in the Department of Biology and Chair of the Faculty Council, was named a [fellow of the American Geophysical Union](#).
- Dr. Anthony J. Giordano, affiliate scientist with Warner College's Center for Human-Carnivore Coexistence and Center for Collaborative Conservation, received the [Career Distinguished Global Service Award in Conservation](#) from the Society for Conservation Biology.
- Dr. Kari Anderson (Communication Studies) received the [National Communication Association's Distinguished Scholar Award](#), which recognizes and rewards NCA members for a lifetime of scholarly achievement in the study of human communication.
- The [Second Annual CHHS Teaching Colloquium](#) took place Sept. 17 and included a keynote, panel discussion, presentations by 2024–25 CHHS Dean's Faculty Teaching Fellows, and two sessions of Innovation Stations.
- Civil & Environmental Engineering's Drs. Joe Scalia and Tom Sale (emeritus) published an [open-source textbook on groundwater contaminants/hydrology](#), which is very relevant in the geoenvironmental/PFAS field.
- Drs. Liz Cowle and Michelle Draeger (Accounting) received the American Accounting Association's [2025 Accounting Horizons Best Paper Award](#) for their study of Big Four firms' charitable giving to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Dr. Caitlin Cadaret (Animal Sciences) invented [The Reproductive Trail, an educational board game](#) that reinforces animal reproductive physiology concepts in a hands-on, engaging format now [available for licensing](#) through CSU STRATA.