



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

CSU's Commitment to Free Expression, Safety, and Democracy

September 15, 2025

Dear CSU Community,

Throughout history, universities have often stood at the center of public debate and dialogue on the most important—and often divisive—issues facing society.

America's land-grant universities, including Colorado State University, were founded in the aftermath of the Civil War as a bold new model for higher education. They opened doors of access to people who had long been excluded, prepared new generations of leaders to strengthen democracy, and produced knowledge that moved the country forward. That legacy sets land-grant institutions apart, giving us a unique and historic responsibility to continue to increase access and foster open dialogue, debate and civil discourse. At CSU, we embrace that role. This commitment remains a top priority, and it continues in this moment as we grapple with the tragic events of last week.

Charlie Kirk was scheduled to speak at CSU this week, alongside several other speakers from various ideological persuasions. Mr. Kirk's life was cut short in an act of violence on another university campus in Utah, a shocking event that demonstrates the severity of the nation's polarization and the urgency of our work.

We anticipate that student organizations will continue to host various events in the coming weeks at CSU and on campuses across the country. While we welcome debate, dialogue and peaceful protest, we will not tolerate threats, intimidation or acts of violence. Our first responsibility is to ensure the safety of every member of this community. CSU is working closely with law enforcement and safety partners to prepare for any future events. We encourage everyone to approach campus events with respect, restraint and a commitment to the values that make CSU strong.

Over the past several years, we have worked intentionally to bring a wide range of speakers and perspectives to CSU — voices from across the political, social and cultural spectrum. These

efforts are not always easy, but they are essential. They build our collective capacity for thoughtful debate, listening as well as speaking, and finding common ground even in disagreement.

In furtherance of that work, this semester we will launch the **Colorado Democracy Prize**. This new initiative will support and reward student groups who come together to thoughtfully debate issues, bridge divides, tackle issues collaboratively and host events that model meaningful democratic engagement. I am personally convening a committee of prominent leaders representing diverse political viewpoints to review proposals and award the prizes at our annual Democracy Summit. The process will be facilitated by our nationally recognized [Center for Public Deliberation](#). We will post more information about this initiative in the coming weeks on our [democracy website](#).

To our students: you are the heart of this university and the next stewards of the land-grant mission. The habits of listening, questioning and engaging across difference that you build here will serve you for a lifetime and shape the future of our state and nation. Take pride in your role, lean into opportunities and know your voices matter deeply.

Moments like this test us. But they also remind us of who we are: a university dedicated to access, discovery, service and the belief that education and dialogue are the lifeblood of democracy. As inheritors of the land-grant tradition, we carry forward a history of resilience, innovation and hope. I trust this community to rise to the challenge with courage, integrity and care for one another—and in doing so, to strengthen both CSU and our nation's democracy.

With respect,

Amy Parsons
President, Colorado State University

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