



## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

# Welcome to Spring Semester

January 17, 2024

Dear CSU Community,

Welcome to spring semester 2024, a fresh opportunity for intellectual engagement and personal growth. This Monday, communities across the nation came together to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a day dedicated to the memory and legacy of a leader whose vision and sacrifice inspired true societal change. While our Northern Colorado and University communities had to forgo the traditional march due to bitter temperatures, an indoor program filled the Fort Collins Lincoln Center. As we launch into the academic journey ahead, I want to thank the event organizers who centered this gathering around the principles of mutual care that bind us together. These principles are articulated well in CSU's Principles of Community, and they will direct us as we carry forward Dr. King's message.

Our Principles of Community—inclusion, integrity, respect, service and social justice—can guide us in the current climate where antisemitism, anti-Muslim sentiment and other forms of discrimination are too common. It is more crucial than ever for each one of us to commit to building an inclusive and respectful environment here on campus and everywhere our lives and work take us.

At CSU, we remain dedicated to upholding both the freedom of speech and the freedom of each member of our community to study and work together free of harassment or violence. We also remain committed to both the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom. As a land grant university, CSU was founded on the principle that access to education should be democratized. This history uniquely positions us to lead the nation in protecting these freedoms and in building the path forward for a healthy democracy.

To this end, our Thematic Year of Democracy initiative recently announced a democracy summit and a slate of nationally known speakers who will discuss their work as public servants; advocates for social and political issues; and community leaders. We have dozens of opportunities to engage with one another, be curious, embrace learning and challenge assumptions. By intentionally seeking out diverse viewpoints and providing a welcoming space

for open discourse, we strengthen our community and prepare ourselves to engage as well-educated citizens who are ready to converse, to vote, to run for office and to participate in all aspects of civil society. Our guests will include Republican Colorado Rep. Ken Buck; Jane Fonda, actor and activist; Ron Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins University and author of “What Universities Owe Democracy;” Donna Brazile, political strategist and *New York Times* bestselling author; and Robert Putnam, professor and author of “Join or Die.” To learn more and register for these events, visit the [Thematic Year of Democracy webpage](#).

Approach these opportunities with an open mind. Attend not only the events where you think your beliefs will align with the viewpoints expressed, but also events where you may not share the speaker’s perspective. These activities prompt each one of us to answer the question “How are you engaging in democracy?” And as we explore diversity of thought, we won’t always agree. But we can agree that hate speech, racism and violence are not consistent with who we are and have no place in our community of learning. In the spirit of Dr. King’s dream, let’s strive for a campus where love triumphs over hate and understanding wins over ignorance. As I look across our campus, I see a wide range of intellectual perspectives, excellence in diverse scholarship and demonstrations of treating one another with respect and dignity, regardless of background, beliefs or identity. I look forward to seeing the remarkable contributions you will make to our university community in 2024!

Best wishes for a fulfilling semester,

Amy Parsons  
Colorado State University President

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