

# ROADRUNNER DEVELOPMENT REPORT



Greetings Roadrunners,

We are excited to share this updated format of the Roadrunner Development Report! In this issue, you will learn about donors like you who are making a difference, one student at a time.

The value of earning a college degree cannot be underestimated. On average, all degrees in all fields from all colleges generate an annual return between 9 and 16 percent. Beyond the monetary return, college graduates report higher levels of happiness and job satisfaction.

During the 2017-18 academic year, \$1,507,105 in private support impacted the lives of 530 scholarship recipients. Every dollar goes further to transform the lives of students and programs at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

As a first-generation graduate, I have personally experienced how education changes lives. I believe nothing is more important to the future competitiveness of Denver than the quality of the education we offer our residents. This is MSU Denver's sweet spot and I am proud to contribute.

We work hard to uphold MSU Denver as the model urban university for opportunity, diversity, excellence and transformation. You make it possible for us to deliver on our promise of keeping the American dream of earning a college degree in reach for all students.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as chair of the MSU Denver Foundation Board. As I prepare to hand over leadership to Ron Tilton, I am confident the University is in good hands. Thank you for working with me over the years to transform lives at MSU Denver.



Marilee Utter  
MSU Denver Foundation Board Chair



*Official ribbon-cutting: front row (l-r): Kirk Fronckiewicz, Bank of America; David Kilcullen; Janine Davidson, Ph.D., MSU Denver; Mariner Kemper, UMB Financial Corporation; Sheldon Henderson, Thermo Fisher Scientific; middle row (l-r): Michael Wray, Ph.D., MSU Denver; Ken Hehir, Tivoli Brewing Company; back row (l-r): Scott Bredecke, MicroStar; Toby Eppard, MillerCoors Brewing Co.; Peter Coors, Molson Coors; Scott Kerkmans, director, MSU Denver Beer Industry Operations Program; Marty Jones, Cask Global Canning Solutions.*

Beer Industry Program Champions and members of the Beer Industry Leadership Council on Sept. 4, 2018, celebrating the grand opening and ribbon-cutting of Phase 1 of the Beer Industry Program Labs. While in attendance, Mariner Kemper, the largest funder in support of Phase 1, verbally committed \$100,000 as the first gift in support of Phase 2 lab construction.



# Future leaders who make a difference: The Puksta Scholars Program

By Lynne Winter '17

Students at Metropolitan State University of Denver are committed to deriving purpose from their education. They understand that every degree earned has a ripple effect, spreading benefits across the Denver community and beyond. The

Puksta Scholars Program provides those students with a platform for civic engagement and the financial assistance they need to keep their dream of earning a college degree alive.

"In 2016 – 35 years after high school graduation, four years after my youngest child graduated from high school and more than 10 years after my husband died – I was ready to complete my degree at MSU Denver," said Monica Simpson, human services and counseling major, Puksta Scholar and grandmother. "The Puksta Scholar Program provides what I need to be successful."

Puksta Scholars Program founders Harry and Eva Puksta were a compassionate couple who valued honesty and hard work. Born in Chicago, Harry was a veteran of World War II and came to Colorado upon his return to the States. There, he met his wife Eva after walking into the Denver Veteran's Administration office. Following



*NiChel Mulstay (second from left), director of development & community outreach, Puksta Foundation, with Puksta Scholars at the Annual Scholarship Dinner, April 2018.*

Harry's career in construction, the Pukstas purchased land and property around the Denver area.

Faced with the decision of how to handle their estate, the couple wanted to demonstrate their love for Colorado by building

a foundation for "the good kids of Colorado, so they could be afforded the chance to go to college." Puksta Foundation Founder and President John Mulstay fulfilled their wish, transforming the lives of over 300 Puksta alumni and current scholars at five Colorado universities.

In its fifth year at MSU Denver, the program promotes a culture of support and accountability for scholars. Deeply rooted in civic engagement and community service, students spend a minimum of four hours per week on their multiyear Puksta project – presented at the annual Student Impact and Innovation Showcase – meet regularly with their MSU Denver mentor and attend monthly meetings.

Simpson has worked on two projects as a Puksta Scholar – first with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and now the Wisdom

*Continued on next page*

# Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative Matching Opportunity

*By Traci McBee Rowe*

Launched in 2014, the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative awards grants to programs designed to give students access to an affordable postsecondary education. Metropolitan State University of Denver has received a generous award of nearly \$195,000 from the state for use in matching new or increased gifts made to the scholarship program, offering donors the chance to double their investment in our student's success.

Qualifying gifts are those investments in general scholarship funds from new donors or groups of donors, or increased commitments beyond historic giving from current donors.

Students receiving COSI scholarships persist at a rate of 94 percent, aiding the University's initiative to increase student support and retention rates. Through the MSU Denver Roadways program, wraparound services guide students transitioning into their sophomore

year, setting them up for success as they select a major and identify their academic and professional plans.

COSI moves the needle toward statewide educational equity goals, particularly among the Latinx students who make up more than half of COSI scholarship recipients and 28.4 percent of MSU Denver's current enrollment. By directly engaging these students at MSU Denver, we can diminish equity gaps in our higher education system and transform the lives of students who are at risk of dropping out of school.



**COLORADO**  
Colorado Opportunity  
Scholarship Initiative

*If you are interested in backing the educational success of MSU Denver students by taking advantage of the COSI match, contact Megan Conklin, executive director, corporate and foundation relations, at 303-605-5815 or [mconkli9@msudenver.edu](mailto:mconkli9@msudenver.edu).*

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Collective – a student organization geared towards supporting nontraditional female college students. She is proud of the social and civic projects her fellow scholars have taken on and has learned something in the process.

"Previously, I only understood these

topics on an intellectual level," said Simpson. "The Puksta Scholar Program is the most eye-opening and heart-expanding experience of my education."

**"It has changed and shaped me as a person – I will be forever grateful."**

*Learn more about the Puksta Scholar Program at [pukstafoundation.org](http://pukstafoundation.org) or contact Megan Conklin, executive director of corporate & foundation relations, at [mconkli9@msudenver.edu](mailto:mconkli9@msudenver.edu) or 303-605-5815.*





# Former faculty supports future educators at MSU Denver

By Lynne Winter '17

Student teaching is a crucial time in a future teacher's academic career – the final step in reaffirming their career choice and getting hands-on experience.

"Student teaching is an amazing experience," said Shana Martin (K-12 teacher licensure, PE). "However, it was a financial drain for my family."

Working in the classroom is the full-time, unpaid and only job of a student teacher. Additionally, they must cover the cost of tuition and fees for the semester – often without another source of income.

**"Students at MSU Denver are making heroic efforts to earn their education and become teachers,"** said

former Associate Professor Cecelia Box (secondary education, '93-'99).

"They work full-time jobs, have families and take full class loads – it is incredible."

Box credits her partner Ric Cooper with opening her eyes to the practice of endowing scholarships to ease financial strain for students and recognize those who have played an important role in her life. In 2016, Box established the Jack and Fran Kaufman



*Scholarship recipient Shana Martin (left) with Jack and Fran Kaufman*

Endowed Scholarship for Student Teaching, named for friends Jack and Fran Kaufman – longtime educators in Boulder Valley Schools and at MSU Denver. In 2017, Cooper initiated the Cecelia A. Box Endowed Teaching Fellowship at MSU Denver in Box's honor.

"Ric felt MSU Denver was a great place to support students and he knew how much working with Metro students meant to me," said Box, who has helped grow the Fellowship. "It's the nicest thing anyone has ever done for me."

Martin, recipient of the Jack and Fran Kaufman Endowed Scholarship, and Elizabeth Gould (elementary education, fall '18), recipient of the Cecelia A. Box Teaching Fellowship, are grateful for their support.

"Receiving the scholarship was an honor," said Gould. "I could focus solely on my teacher development and dive into each moment of my residency wholeheartedly."



*Scholarship recipient Elizabeth Gould (right) with Marjorie Fisch (left)*

*Continued on Page 10*

# Pay it forward

## Mark J. Smith fulfills a promise to his younger self

*By Lynne Winter '17*

First-generation college student and Metropolitan State University of Denver senior Jessica Madera (accounting and finance, spring '19) understands the value of higher education.

"As a single mother and first-generation American born to Mexican parents who only received a second-grade education, I learned the importance of receiving an education," said Madera.

However, building a better future comes with struggles. "My journey is full of challenges and sacrifices," Madera continued. "There is the financial strain of balancing the cost of living and the rising costs of higher education, along with dividing my time between my daughters, work, school and studying."

There is a significant need for single parent support at MSU Denver. The fall 2018 census indicates 975 students are single parents and nearly 6,600 are children from single-parent homes. MSU Denver donor Mark J. Smith, CFP®, CPA, CIMA® and president of M.J. Smith & Associates, hopes to lighten the load for students like Madera with the Mark J. Smith Education Scholarship.



"The desire to give back stems from my personal experience," Smith said. "As a first-generation student coming from a

family that could not afford to send me to college, I recognize the impact of scholarships."

One of three children raised by a single mother who worked as a waitress, the focus was on taking care of day-to-day necessities. "While still in high school, I heard about Iowa Central Community College," said Smith. "There were scholarships available – people were willing to invest in my education. I applied and received one."

**"I decided that if I were ever in the position to help someone else receive an education, I would."**

When the time came, MSU Denver seemed like a natural fit. "I was impressed by what I saw," he said. "MSU Denver has the affordability of a community college, accommodates nontraditional students and has an undergraduate degree program in personal financial planning."

In addition to his named scholarship, Smith is a member of the Legacy Society, having included the University in his estate plans with a generous gift to help transform the lives of future students at MSU Denver.

"If it weren't for this scholarship, I would not have been able to continue to pursue my dream of earning my degree," Madera said. "I will not forget the generosity bestowed on me."

Smith is optimistic his philanthropic spirit will begin a cycle of giving. "Giving

*Continued on next page*



## Taking Roadrunner Spirit on the road

By Lynne Winter '17

More than 60,000 alumni live within 25 miles of the MSU Denver campus – a marathon of Roadrunners ready to join forces across the Greater Denver area.

The MSU Denver Alumni Association understands the challenges alumni face when attending events on campus – traffic, parking, long workdays. Determined to connect with alumni, they developed the 25 Mile Alumni Engagement Campaign to take Roadrunner Spirit on the road.

The campaign took flight on Aug. 24, at the Wings Over the Rockies Boeing Blue Sky Aviation Gallery in Centennial, Colorado. Hosted by MSU Denver alumna, Krista Mortensen '17, annual fund coordinator for Wings Over the Rockies, attendees learned about new campus initiatives impacting the Department of Aviation and Aerospace

Science while enjoying spectacular interactive exhibits. Future stops include Meier Skis, Dog Haus Biergarten, The Game Lounge and more.

The Alumni Association will be visiting neighborhoods across the metro area on a monthly basis over the course of the next year. Events feature free food and drinks, complimentary MSU Denver gear, opportunities for networking, appearances by President Janine Davidson, Ph.D., and information from the MSU Denver Champions legislative advocacy program.

To find a stop near you, or to showcase your business by hosting, visit [msudenver.edu/alumni/events/25milecampaign](http://msudenver.edu/alumni/events/25milecampaign).

For more information about the MSU Denver Alumni Association, contact Brandi Rideout, director of alumni relations, at [brideout@msudenver.edu](mailto:brideout@msudenver.edu) or 303-605-5187.

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back is a great, self-fulfilling endeavor," he said. "As students are supported in their mission to improve their lives by attaining a college degree, they will be inspired to give back when they are in a position to do so."

To learn how you can support College of Business scholarships, contact Nicholas Kinney, director of development, at [nkinney3@msudenver.edu](mailto:nkinney3@msudenver.edu) or 303-605-6956.



# Presidential Inauguration Soirée

## Sept. 7, 2018



*USAF Gen. Darren McDew (ret.), President Janine Davidson, Ph.D., and Denver Mayor Michael Hancock*



*MSU Denver Trustee Barb Grogan, DJ Close and Teresa Kostenbauer*



*MSU Denver Foundation Board member Marti Awad and Janice Fritsch*



*Mark Ferrandino, Carlos Martinez, Karen McNeil-Miller, Megan Conklin, executive director of corporate and foundation relations, and Phil Danielson*



*Barbara Beatty, MSU Denver ombudsman, Allyssa Joseph, associate director of development, Rebecca Canges, chair, special education, Liz Hinde, dean, School of Education and Marianne Kenney*



*Head softball coach Annie Hurst with Rowdy, Sarena Espinoza '18, Lina Espinoza and Robert Espinoza*



*MSU Denver Foundation Board Chair Marilee Utter, Harry Utter and Yolanda Ortega*



*MSU Denver Trustee Michelle Lucero, Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, Alondra Chavez and Molly Cohen*



*Rodney Scully, President Janine Davidson Ph.D., Sean Reifman '20 and Marsha Scully*



*Jim Brown, Colorado Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne, MSU Denver Trustee Jim Mulligan and Joan Bureson*



# Cavell Alexander transforms lives with endowed scholarship

MSU Denver alumna's impact on accounting students adds up to great things

By Lynne Winter '17

Metropolitan State University of Denver students show true Roadrunner spirit in their unwavering commitment to higher education. Senior Elisabeth Hensley (B.S. accounting and finance, fall '19) knew what path she needed to take to improve her and her son's lives, but she needed support to do it.

"As a single mother going to college, any one of the obstacles I face could have deterred me from continuing on, but I didn't quit," said Hensley. "Instead, I put out the call for help and it was answered."

Help came in the form of the Cavell L. Alexander Endowed Scholarship. Founded by MSU Denver Alumni Association 2018 Distinguished Alumna of the Year Cavell Alexander (B.A. accounting, '90), the scholarship provides financial relief to undergraduate or graduate students who have declared a major in accounting.

"MSU Denver gave me a great foundation for my future," Alexander said. "It is a fantastic school that cares about its students."

Alexander attended MSU Denver at a time in her life when the University provided precisely the type of flexibility she needed as a nontraditional student.

"I was living in Denver and interested in earning an accounting degree,"

Alexander said. "MSU Denver was top-ranked and catered to someone like me who held a full-time job and was married."



Vice President, Chief Audit Executive and Chief Compliance Officer at UCHHealth, Alexander has maintained an impressive record of giving back to MSU Denver.

Three years after graduating in 1990, Alexander began making annual gifts to the Department of Accounting as a way to support future students and programs.

"The professors who taught me had been doing the job they were teaching, so they were able to apply what we were learning to my professional life," she said. "They also helped me through a difficult time in my personal life during my final semester."

"MSU Denver was good to me," said Alexander. **"My hope is that this scholarship will lighten the load for a student in a tight spot so they can focus on their education."**

Through her scholarship, Alexander is continuing the tradition of transforming

*Continued on next page*



# 50/50 Raffle raises over \$200,000

By Lynne Winter '17

During the 2018 baseball season, the MSU Denver Alumni Association partnered with the Colorado Rockies to fundraise for MSU Denver students and programs by selling 50/50 Raffle tickets during Rockies home games.

From the first day of selling, Roadrunner spirit was flying high and in a twist of fate, that day's jackpot winner was 2010 MSU Denver alumna Andrea Burgess (pictured, center). All ticket sellers were volunteers, donating their time in support of MSU Denver. Andy Thangasamy, Ph.D., of the Department of Political Science sold tickets for an astounding 28 games, designating his volunteer earnings towards the Jim Anderson #KongStrong Memorial Scholarship,



Women's Athletics and other sports.

The funds raised for MSU Denver will cover a variety of needs. "The baseball program is not fully funded each year," says Ryan Strain, head coach. "The money we raised working the 50/50 Raffle will give our players the best possible experience."

If you missed the 50/50 Raffle this season, be sure to get ROWDY with the Alumni Association and the Colorado Rockies in 2019!

For more information about the 50/50 Raffle, contact Brandi Rideout, director of Alumni Relations, at [brideout@msudenver.edu](mailto:brideout@msudenver.edu).

## 50/50 Raffle 2018 Season

- **82** Rockies home games
- **902** volunteer tickets sellers
- **\$700,370** in ticket sales
- **1,098,888** tickets sold

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*Continued from Box & Cooper, Page 4*

In paying it forward, Box and Cooper are transforming the lives of MSU Denver students, their families and the community.

"The scholarship provided my family with the cushion we needed for me to complete student teaching," said Martin. "I am forever thankful."

For more information about supporting School of Education scholarships, contact Allyssa Joseph, associate director of development, at 303-615-2045 or [ajoseph9@msudenver.edu](mailto:ajoseph9@msudenver.edu).

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lives at MSU Denver, and for that, Hensley is thankful. "Receiving this scholarship impacts my life beyond the financial," said Hensley. "It gives me more time to devote to my classes, son and volunteer activities, as well as providing my son with a lesson in hard work and determination."

To learn how you can support College of Business student scholarships, contact Nicholas Kinney, director of development, at [nkinney3@msudenver.edu](mailto:nkinney3@msudenver.edu) or 303-605-5956.

# Jim Anderson's legacy is #KongStrong

*By Lynne Winter '17*

When Jim Anderson received his brain cancer diagnosis in spring 2018, he was confident he could beat it.

"He'd say that he was going to be the 'miracle' survivor doctors would study to understand how to treat and cure future patients," said Ceri Anderson, Jim's widow. "But if that wasn't the case, he insisted something good had to come out of it."

"He was notorious for being late for everything except a game at the ballpark," said Ceri. "It was our family's happy place."

The Anderson family was grateful to have the opportunity to spend the time they had left with Jim at the Regency Athletic Complex at MSU Denver, surrounded by a supportive community and the sport they loved. "If you have to go through something like this, it is the perfect place," said Ceri.



*Jim Anderson with the 2018 MSU Denver Roadrunner Softball team at the Cancer Awareness game on April 23, 2018.*

Jim passed away two months later, leaving behind Ceri and daughters Annika and Abby. He was a devoted fan of the MSU Denver Roadrunner Softball Program – Annika played four seasons and Abby joined the roster in fall 2018 – and never missed a game, considering every player a “bonus daughter.”

A fun-loving man and eternal optimist, Jim had a wide circle of friends everywhere he went. While in the hospital, he drew his strength from an unexpected source – King Kong.

"He told me that he wasn't afraid, he was angry. Like King Kong,

he was going to 'tear this [stuff] up,'" said Ceri. "He said, 'Don't call me Jim anymore, call me Kong.'"

At that moment, #KongStrong was born. It became the rallying cry for Jim's family and friends, and the inspiration for establishing the Jim Anderson #KongStrong Memorial

*Continued on next page*

# Clearing financial roadblocks for Roadrunners

Short-term financial barriers play a critical role in an MSU Denver student's decision to drop out instead of continuing to work toward achieving the American dream of earning a degree.

"During my senior year, I ran out of financial aid. When we had an unexpected medical bill, it became impossible to make ends meet and pay for tuition," said 2017 MSU Denver graduate Lynne Winter. "Without help from my parents – an option many students do not have – I would have had to drop out."

Developing the Roadrunner Student Emergency Aid Fund is one solution for providing students with the support they need to stay in school. Financed through private donations from generous students and members of the Roadrunner community, such a fund will offer limited emergency financial assistance to currently enrolled students who are unable

to meet essential expenses due to a temporary or unexpected hardship.

The Roadrunner Student Emergency Aid Fund complements MSU Denver's goal to increase student retention and graduation rates by safeguarding students' futures.

"For the first time in my life, I have a career I am passionate about and can take care of my family," said Winter. "Graduating from MSU Denver changed everything for me."

By establishing the Roadrunner Student Emergency Aid Fund, we can ensure MSU Denver students never have to choose between survival and their education. Together, we can transform lives.

*For more information on how to support the Roadrunner Student Emergency Aid Fund, contact Katie Mnichowicz at [kmnichow@msudenver.edu](mailto:kmnichow@msudenver.edu) or 303-605-5820.*

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Endowed Scholarship, which will support Colorado softball players seeking their degree at MSU Denver.

Jim's life motto was simple: Be kind. Students at MSU Denver will experience the impact of his kindness in perpetuity, thanks to the generosity of the more than 100 donors who contributed \$50,000 to the scholarship in just over three months. "MSU Denver turned out to

be a homey fit for our family and is the right place for the #KongStrong legacy," said Ceri. "Jim would be happy with how the scholarship will support future students."

*For more information on supporting the Jim Anderson #KongStrong Memorial Endowed Scholarship, contact Jamie Hurst, J.D., assistant vice president of strategic engagement, at 303-615-2044 or [jurst7@msudenver.edu](mailto:jurst7@msudenver.edu).*



# College of Business receives \$40,000 in scholarship funds

Community ally Aegon Transamerica Foundation transforms lives at MSU Denver by doubling scholarship funds.

By Lynne Winter '17

The Aegon Transamerica Foundation recognizes the value of investing in the future of a workforce-ready, university-educated population. Their philanthropic spirit is giving students who might have otherwise been unable to attend college the opportunity to achieve the American dream of earning a degree at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

"To immigrants like myself, the thought of receiving a college education is unimaginable," said Jhovani Becerra, a management major at MSU Denver.

A leading provider of life insurance, savings, investment and retirement solutions committed to improving the wellness of communities, Transamerica worked with the MSU Denver College of Business in 2017 to establish the Transamerica Scholarship. The scholarship assists full-time students who have financial need and are committed to pursuing a degree in a business related field – economics, accounting, marketing or another financial services discipline.

"We are deeply grateful that



*2018 Annual Scholarship Dinner Attendees (l-r): Mary Heffernan, Transamerica, Caren Garcia-Hernandez & Stephanie Long, scholarship recipients, Marjin Smit, Transamerica, Alexander Ponce, scholarship recipient, and John Koehler, Transamerica*

Transamerica chose to create a scholarship at MSU Denver," said Anne Murphy, Ph.D., dean of MSU Denver's College of Business. "Together, we are preparing tomorrow's workforce for success."

For students like Becerra, the scholarship offers rewards that extend far beyond obtaining a degree. "As a first-generation college student, receiving the Transamerica Scholarship has helped me break intergenerational educational barriers," he said. "My niece and nephew see my achievements and believe that if I can do it, they can too."

The Transamerica Scholarship – initially funded at \$20,000 – supported eight students during the 2017-18 academic year. The scholarship will continue to benefit eight students and Transamerica has generously increased the scholarship funds to \$40,000 for the upcoming school year. In addition to financial aid, they hosted an open house for scholarship recipients at the Transamerica offices in downtown Denver in fall 2018.

*Continued on next page*

# 2019 Events

- JANUARY **25 Mile Alumni Engagement**  
- Peak View Brewing Co.
- FEBRUARY **25 Mile Alumni Engagement**  
- Barnett & Son Brewing Co.
- FEBRUARY 15-17 **Homecoming**
- MARCH **25 Mile Alumni Engagement**  
- Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
- MARCH/APRIL **Annual Scholarship Dinner**
- MAY 31 **Roadrunners Athletics Scholarship Dinner & Auction**
- JUNE 13 **4th Annual Summer Soirée**
- SEPTEMBER **President’s & Legacy Society Brunch with President Davidson**

*Continued from Transamerica, Page 13*

Transamerica wants to help people live well today and worry less about tomorrow. They are living up to their word by doing precisely that for the students of MSU Denver.

“This scholarship has provided me with the chance to focus my time on my education and serving my community,” said Becerra. “I am astounded that I have come this far in realizing my dreams.”

“It’s only possible because of scholarships from donors like Transamerica.”

*For more information about how you can support student scholarships, contact Allyssa Joseph, associate director of development, at 303-615-2045 or [ajoseph9@msudenver.edu](mailto:ajoseph9@msudenver.edu).*

For details and additional events, visit [msudenver.edu/alumni/events](https://msudenver.edu/alumni/events)

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