



## **Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs**

Leadership Profile

Summer 2023



*WittKieffer*

## Executive Summary

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) seeks a transformative leader, bridge-builder and strategist to serve as its next Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost/EVPAA).

Since 1965, [MSU Denver](#) has offered tailored degree programs to keep up with students' real lives, providing a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global and technological society. Located in the heart of downtown Denver and less than an hour from the Rocky Mountains, the Auraria campus is a launch pad for all that Colorado has to offer. A national model of institutional partnerships, MSU Denver shares a campus and some resources with the University of Colorado at Denver and the Community College of Denver – all supported by the Auraria Higher Education Center.

As the leading public institution in Colorado for access and economic mobility and as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and Minority Serving Institution, MSU Denver has the most diverse student body in Colorado – 57.7% of undergraduates are first-gen students and 50.3% are students of color. The 16,396 undergraduate and 1,170 graduate students choose from over 100 majors, 100 minors, 10 graduate programs and 40 certificate programs. MSU Denver has been recognized as the Top Transfer Destination in Colorado, a [Top College for Diversity](#), recognized as [Best for Vets](#) in 2021, the No. 3 [Most Innovative University in the West](#) and a [Most Civically Engaged Student Body](#).

MSU Denver's next provost will join a dynamic, mission-centered and performance-driven leadership team led by [President Janine A. Davidson](#) in the heart of the growing Denver metropolitan area. As the university's chief academic officer, the next provost/EVPAA will understand the need to integrate work, service and short-term credentials into the institution's academic pathways and have ideas on how to best accomplish this given MSU Denver's unique strengths and resource environment. The next provost will be experienced using data; will be focused on collaborative leadership across the institution but particularly with the vice president for student affairs; and will practice inclusive management to drive accountability for student outcomes down to the classroom level as well as to guide short and long-term budget decision making. Additionally, the provost/EVPAA will serve as the key ambassador between faculty and administration, building effective and sustainable relationships with an eye toward the whole student experience to promote enrollment, retention, persistence and success.

The successful provost/EVPAA candidate will be a synergistic leader committed to student success and an experienced change manager who promotes leadership and empowerment at every level of the university. The provost/EVPAA will join MSU Denver and continue the work of launching student success outcomes, an inclusive, cross-functional process co-led with the Vice President for Student Affairs and focused on five key areas of institutional transformation: faculty and staff workload, centralized advising systems, curricular alignment, technology optimization, and enrollment and retention goal-setting. As a result of this work, MSU Denver is committed to increasing student completion rates over the next 7 years.

The provost/EVPAA will have a strong understanding of the complex social, political, economic and technological changes affecting higher education today, bringing creativity and vision to help MSU Denver meet those potential challenges head on. With over half of MSU Denver students transferring credits from other institutions, the provost/EVPAA will lead efforts to bridge to the Colorado Community College

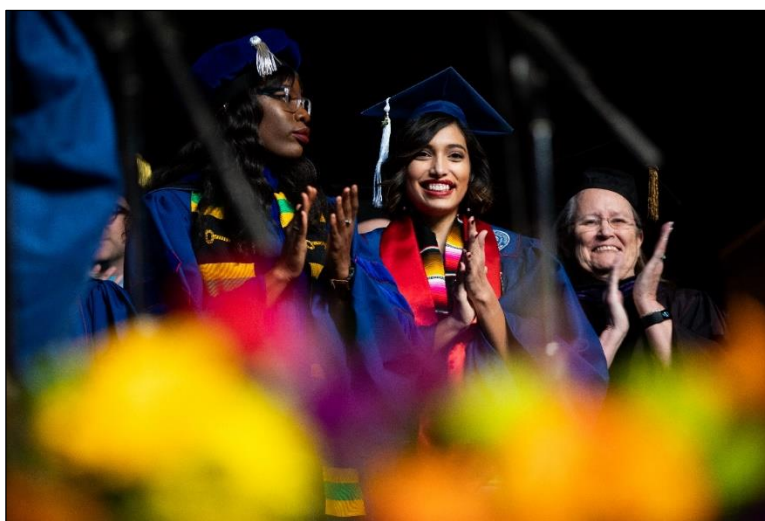
System and ensure a seamless path to credentials for Colorado's learners. The individual will also capitalize on the university's current momentum and leverage its mission and values as an [Anchor Institution](#) to create a lasting imprint on the city of Denver, the state of Colorado and beyond. The successful candidate must have an earned doctorate from an accredited institution with the academic qualifications consistent with an appointment to the rank of full professor with tenure. This individual must also have a record of progressive administrative experience.

To submit a nomination or express a personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will join MSU Denver at a crucial moment in its history. Embracing the Roadrunner passion for student success, the provost/EVPAA must have the ability to set priorities, determine a plan to achieve them and communicate effectively with multiple constituencies for effective implementation.

MSU Denver seeks in its next provost/EVPAA an effective, inclusive, creative and collaborative leader to take its well-established academic programs and operations to the next level. The ideal candidate must be a superb communicator and collaborator with a strong track record of tangible successes and achievements.



In the spirit of inclusive leadership, the provost/EVPAA will be fully empowered by President Davidson to lead, innovate, and engage the community at this critical moment and to advance a shared vision of student-centered innovation and excellence anchored in student success.

The provost/EVPAA will have a strong commitment to enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in the University community and the ability to recruit outstanding new faculty as well as retain and promote high-achieving current faculty.

Working closely with the president, the provost/EVPAA will engage with the following issues, ideas and opportunities at MSU Denver:

- **Set a compelling vision for Academic Affairs**

The provost/EVPAA will have the opportunity to establish a vision and related goals and strategies to enhance the work of [Academic Affairs](#), as well as build upon a recent strategic realignment of academic programs to better meet student needs and address workforce opportunities. This reorganization included



the launch of an innovative [Health Institute](#) that integrates ten health-related academic departments to better facilitate relevant, interdisciplinary education.



The provost/EVPAA will develop and nurture partnerships between the university and various Colorado organizations that further elevate the academic enterprise, including innovative educational programs such as the institution's on-campus hotel and the Center for Education Solutions. This includes advocacy for public policy at the state level, active leadership with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and public-private partnerships (i.e.

industry, non-profits, community leaders, etc.) The provost/EVPAA will value and promote both time-honored and essential programs in the arts and humanities and programs with a more direct career focus.

#### ■ **Enhance and establish new academic programs**

With a strong understanding of current and emerging trends in higher education, the provost/EVPAA will assess and implement promising practices for current academic programs and make research-based decisions on the development and launch of new programs. Given current and forecasted economic indicators, the provost/EVPAA will be asked to look both at programs that meet short-term enrollment and workforce goals and at those which merit long-term strategic investment.

#### ■ **Generate and steward new revenue streams**

With state investment continuing to decline, the provost/EVPAA will need to manage resources strategically and explore innovative, new revenue streams to support current and future academic programs. As the chief academic affairs officer, the provost/EVPAA will work in close collaboration with stakeholders from across the university, such as deans, chairs and other faculty members to decide when and where to make strategic investments that benefit the university in order to meet the needs of students as well as the workforce and industry demands in Colorado.

#### ■ **Advance MSU Denver's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**

As a key leader at a proud Hispanic-Serving Institution and Minority Serving Institution, the provost/EVPAA will play a significant role in MSU Denver's aspirations and efforts to become an anti-racist University. The provost/EVPAA will work hand-in-hand with the president, the vice president for diversity and inclusion and other senior staff to provide compassionate, culturally relevant, and competent leadership and guidance around diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. As a bridge-builder to the faculty, the provost/EVPAA will work to nurture a vibrant and healthy community where all people feel welcomed and valued.

## Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

MSU Denver's next provost and executive vice president for academic affairs will be a synergistic, communicative, data-informed and high-energy educational leader committed to student success. The new provost/EVPAA will possess exceptional leadership qualities such as integrity, decisiveness, optimism, dynamism, collegiality, inclusiveness and sound judgment. The successful candidate will be an individual capable of engaging community stakeholders in the academic mission of the university and passionate about MSU Denver's mission, vision and laser focus on student success.

The next provost/EVPAA will have a track record of career achievement and have strong evidence of some combination of the following professional and personal qualities, knowledge, experiences and characteristics:

To be able to realize this opportunity, the ideal candidate will possess most or all the following qualities or experience:

- An earned doctorate or equivalent terminal degree in an academic discipline from an accredited institution;
- A record as an accomplished administrator with progressively responsible academic administration positions in higher education as both a leader and manager of change.
- A distinguished record of achievement and professional credentials consistent with appointment at the rank of full professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver, to include having earned tenure at an accredited institution of higher education;
- Experience managing faculty and staff in the higher education context with direct supervision experience of staff and administrators;
- A record of commitment, advocacy and success in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (e.g., recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff; infusion of diversity and inclusive teaching practices into the curriculum; promotion of a work environment that is inclusive and collegial for all faculty, staff and students) with a commitment to creating an inclusive environment and closing equity gaps for underrepresented populations;
- Record of successful leadership, with the ability to build strong management teams, energize and inspire university constituent groups, delegate responsibility and authority, collaborate and consider alternative perspectives and bring university groups to actionable consensus;
- Experience managing complex budgets; integrating budget decisions and strategic planning; and ensuring institutional efficiency;



- Demonstrated commitment to shared governance and a history of collaborative, inclusive, consultative and transparent decision-making, including communicating difficult decisions respectfully;
- A demonstrated record of commitment to supporting faculty research, grant proposals, professional development and excellence in university teaching;
- A history of innovation in developing and supporting academic programs that support student success goals;
- Demonstrated ability to integrate student success best practices and career preparation effectively with academic program delivery to achieve student success;
- Demonstrated ability to communicate and work effectively with members of the higher education community including coordinating and governing boards, legislators and business and other community leaders while actively cultivating fundraising opportunities to support programs and students;
- Knowledge of institutional accreditation processes;
- Demonstrated accomplishments in collaborating with other members of a leadership team in implementing successful university-level policies and initiatives;
- Knowledge of current and emerging issues, trends and strategies in public higher education e.g., shifting demographics, funding model changes and responses to ever-changing academic delivery options;
- Demonstrated ability to create and support an active, student-centered learning environment;
- Demonstrated ability to determine an appropriate array of excellent academic programs responsive to the needs of students and industry;
- A track record of academic transformation and effective change management;
- Knowledge of online teaching strategies;
- Demonstrated ability to leverage state resources with grant funded projects, revenues from public-private partnerships (P3s), private philanthropic support and other innovative streams of revenue in support of the university mission;
- A strong sense of vision and commitment to strategic planning and decision-framing;
- Demonstrated experience implementing programs that focus on the improvement of retention and graduation rates;
- Demonstrated experience in practices to promote student enrollment.

# About Metropolitan State University of Denver

## Overview



Established in 1965, MSU Denver was founded to serve students who were underrepresented in higher education, those whose life paths and experiences did not fit the traditional mold. Fifty-five years later, the university continues to serve more than 18,000 of Colorado's extraordinary and diverse students, providing them with the foundation on which to build their unique American dream.

MSU Denver is distinguished for its status as a Hispanic serving institution and as the leading Colorado university for enrolling first-generation, veteran, Black, and Latinx students. As the third largest institution of higher education in Colorado and the only one with an open-access mission, MSU Denver is a model university for today's college students. The university serves the most diverse undergraduate student population in the state, as well as the most first-generation students and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students. Over half of MSU Denver students are transfer students and nearly 80% of the university's students work while going to school. The university is focused on making sure all of its diverse and hard-working students have the well-rounded educational experience, financial supports and wraparound services they need to excel.

Through affordable, flexible, and holistic education, MSU Denver helps students build essential skills grounded in a multicultural and global perspective that lead to undergraduate and graduate degrees, followed by career and life success.

## Real-World Learning for Today's Students

MSU Denver is dedicated to meeting students where they are and launching them to where they want to go – with robust in-person, hybrid and online offerings in bachelor's and master's degree programs that prepare students to connect to careers, prepare for the future, and serve their communities.

The university is known for its real-world education, balancing technical skills honed through tangible practice along with essential skills developed through the arts and humanities.



## Student-Centered Academic Excellence

MSU Denver prides itself on a richly talented faculty comprised of teacher-scholars who are highly dedicated and empowered to support diverse students in growing as scholars, becoming leaders in their fields, and succeeding in their personal, professional, and civic lives. The university delivers a relevant, rigorous, and innovative academic experience, offering more than 100 bachelor's degrees and eight graduate programs. MSU Denver Athletics compete in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC) and in the NCAA Division II with sixteen intercollegiate athletic programs.

## Civic and Economic Catalyst

MSU Denver activates the talents and passions of its students, alumni, faculty, and staff. As an Anchor Institution with a vibrant campus in the heart of downtown Denver, the university serves as a civic, economic, and talent-rich catalyst to meet the opportunities and challenges facing Colorado and its diverse communities. As an in-demand partner for employers across the city and state, the university develops workforce pipelines, puts on events and advocates for shared priorities. Most of our students often come from and return to communities in Colorado.

The university is an in-demand partner for employers across the city and state – creating workforce pipelines, developing customized education solutions, and collaborating in new and innovative ways to support the state's needs. The [Classroom to Career Hub](#) has become a highly sought-after partner in Colorado for workforce and talent pipeline convenings, connecting industry and government employers to MSU Denver's talented students and faculty.

MSU Denver is a leader in civic engagement. In 2018, it was recognized for its excellence in engagement initiatives by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. In 2016, the university also had the highest registered-student voting rate for a large, public, regional university in the nation, turning out 66.5% of student voters.





The university is a designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and has been a leader in advocacy for DACA students. MSU Denver was the first institution in Colorado to offer a special tuition rate for undocumented students in June 2012 – about three weeks before the Obama administration announced the DACA program.

### Values Lived Every Day

MSU Denver employees embody a set of shared values, affectionately known as CADRE. The values of community, accessibility, diversity, respect, entrepreneurship, and excellence permeate every aspect of university life and reflect Roadrunners' commitment to one another.

In particular, MSU Denver embodies diversity in all of its rich expressions. The university is committed to engaging in the anti-racism work necessary to create systemic change and to cultivating a vibrant and healthy learning community. MSU Denver also serves as a convener, bringing together civic, industry, public and nonprofit leaders, activists, academics, and other community members to address the most pressing issues of racial justice facing its campus, city, state, and world.

### Innovative and Forward Looking

In 2019, MSU Denver was named the fifth most innovative university in the West region by U.S. News and World Report. That entrepreneurial spirit characterizes the university's forward-looking, adaptable approach to meeting the challenges of our day.

Like colleges and universities across the nation, MSU Denver is currently working to address the trifecta of recent challenges: a global pandemic and its resulting economic impacts, as well as a historic racial-justice movement. The university sees this difficult moment as a time of great opportunity in which it can rise to meet these challenges and define a new model for excellence in higher education. MSU Denver has already begun to examine how it can evolve and advance its mission-critical work to respond to the needs of its students and the community.



### Mission

Our mission is to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education, and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society. That's possible here.

## Values

MSU Denver's mission, vision, ongoing operations and strategic plan are informed by CADRE, a core set of values that define who we are – and aspire to be – as a university.

- Community
- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Respect
- Excellence

## Academics

MSU Denver pursues a single academic goal across all fields of study: to provide every student a college education rooted in rigorous, relevant and valuable content.

- **100+ majors and minors**
- **10 graduate programs**
- **30+ certificate programs**
- **Custom-degree options**

## Colleges and Schools

The **College of Business** works for you. Learn how to become an entrepreneur or explore the global economy from faculty and staff who are business leaders themselves. You can also benefit from the school's alliances with chambers of commerce, reputable companies and other business organizations.

In the **College of Health and Human Sciences**, you literally put what you learn in the classroom to work. Apply academic principles to a variety of practical, hands-on experiences and open yourself to new careers or take your current job to the next level. Here, you don't just walk the talk, you work it.

The **College of Letters, Arts and Sciences** is the backbone of MSU Denver. As the university's largest school, you can customize your path to success from a huge variety of subjects and certificate and/or degree programs.

The **School of Education** offers teacher licensure and other education-related programs for undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate students interested in the field of pre-K-12 education.

The **School of Hospitality** offers you more hands-on experience in Colorado's fastest-growing industry than any other university in the state. You can specialize in restaurant management, event planning, hotel management, brewing science and more.

The **College of Aerospace, Computing, Engineering and Design** prepares students for innovation and problem-solving, providing advanced expertise across technological disciplines. The college engages with industry partners, provide students with meaningful experiences in the field and prepares the state's most diverse student body in the pursuit of postgraduate degrees and lifelong learning.

## Leadership

The university is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees appointed by Colorado's governor. These impressive leaders offer a wealth of industry, government, and non-profit expertise, as well as a sincere passion for supporting the MSU Denver's mission. Among the university's most recently appointed trustees is an immigrant-rights advocate who is also a DACA recipient.

### **Janine A. Davidson, Ph.D., President**



Janine Davidson, Ph.D., has served as president of MSU Denver since 2017. She is a national thought-leader in higher education and on topics such as public service and national security policy. She is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a Fellow in the National Academy of Public Administration.

Prior to her time at the university, Davidson served as the 32nd undersecretary of the United States Navy. Her appointment as Navy "under" followed nearly 30 years of academic, civilian, and military service.

She has taught at George Mason University, Georgetown University, Davidson College, and various professional military schools, and was an aviation and aerobatics flight instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

She recently returned to the classroom at MSU Denver, co-teaching a course on the philosophical and legal origins of freedom of speech in the United States.

Davidson began her career as an Air Force officer and cargo pilot. She was a distinguished graduate of the Air Force Squadron Officer School and was the first woman to fly the Air Force's tactical C-130.

As president of MSU Denver, Davidson has launched and developed the Classroom to Career Hub – aimed at connecting MSU Denver students with local and national employers for a direct pipeline into Colorado's economy and beyond. She has also overseen the creation of the University's Health Institute – a collaboration of 10 academic departments in health-related fields that addresses the state's health care workforce shortages.

Davidson has proven to be a fierce advocate for students, staunchly supporting the DREAM Act and MSU Denver's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students. From her very first days on campus, she has championed the role colleges and universities play in "holding the line on the American dream." She has also implemented an inclusive leadership model at MSU Denver, which emphasizes bringing diverse perspectives to the table and empowering employees to act as leaders at all levels of the university.

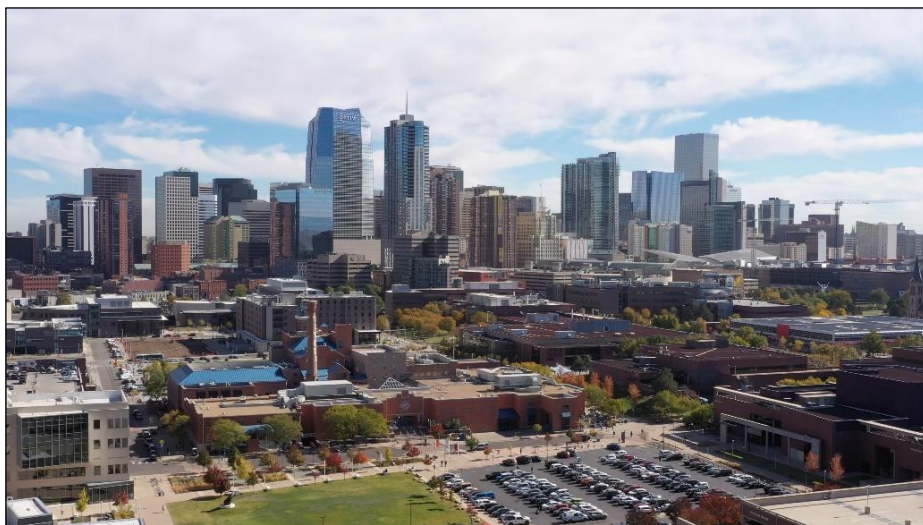


## Denver, Colorado

### **Denver is our community – and our classroom.**

Denver is near the mountains, not in them. The Mile High City is located on high rolling plains, 12 miles east of the "foothills," a series of gentle mountains that climb to 11,000 feet. Just beyond is the "Front Range of the Rocky Mountains," a series of formidable snowcapped peaks that rise to 14,000 feet. Denver might not be in the mountains, but the mountains still dominate the city. The picturesque mountain panorama from Denver is 140 miles long. There are 200 visible named peaks including 32 that soar to 13,000 feet and above. Located in the heart of downtown and less than an hour from the Rocky Mountains, the Auraria campus is a launch pad for all that Colorado has to offer.

### **Denver has one of the most walkable downtowns in the nation.**



Denver boasts the 10th largest downtown in America and is one of the most exciting and walkable. Within a mile radius, downtown Denver has three major sports stadiums, the nation's second-largest performing arts center, three colleges, an assortment of art and history museums, a mint that produces 10 billion coins a year, a river offering whitewater rafting, more than 11,000 hotel rooms within a short walking distance of the

Colorado Convention Center (more than 50,000 first-class hotel rooms in the greater metro area), a downtown theme and water park, downtown aquarium and hundreds of chef-driven restaurants.

### **Denver has one of the most unique city park systems in the nation.**

Denver has more than 200 parks within the city and 20,000 acres of parks in the nearby mountains, including spectacular Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre. The city has its own bison herd at Buffalo Herd Overlook. Other mountain parks include Echo Lake, at the base of the Mount Evans highway – the highest paved road in North America – and Buffalo Bill's Grave on top of Lookout Mountain.

### **Denver is a cultural city with a highly educated population.**

In its Old West days, Denver had a performance of "Macbeth" before it had a school or hospital. Today, the Denver Performing Arts Complex has nine theaters seating 10,000 people. The seven-county metro area has a self-imposed sales tax for the arts, which is distributed to 300 arts organizations and facilities. Denver's live music scene entertains year-round, ranging from intimate venues like the Paramount

Theatre to legendary open-air spots like Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre, where the Beatles, U2 and many more have played.

**It's easy being "green" in Denver.**

From global warming and renewable energy to environmental cleanup, Denver is emerging as a model for sustainable cities. The Colorado Convention Center is green through and through, including a rare LEED Gold certification for existing buildings and the Blue Bear Farm, which grows more than 5,000 pounds of fresh produce annually! Denver International Airport is dedicated to sustainable practices, including a Community Stewardship philosophy that includes energy and environmental management, green buildings and noise abatement. The Denver Zoo's Toyota Elephant Passage uses a biomass gasification system, which can turn human trash and animal waste into energy to power the exhibit. Plus, many of Denver's famous craft breweries are committed to recycling programs and responsible water usage.

## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume, a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile and a diversity statement.

WittKieffer is assisting Metropolitan State University of Denver in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by August 14, 2023.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Jen Meyers Pickard, Ph.D., Darrien Davenport, Ed.D., and Lauren Bruce-Stets  
[MSUDenverProvost@wittkieffer.com](mailto:MSUDenverProvost@wittkieffer.com)

The compensation range for this position is \$290,000 to \$325,000. Metropolitan State University of Denver offers excellent benefits including medical, vision, dental, flexible spending accounts, retirement, life insurance and a wellness program. Additional benefits include 12 paid holidays, paid time off, multiple forms of leave (6-weeks Parental Leave, Bereavement Leave, etc.), an undergraduate tuition benefit and discounts.

*Metropolitan State University of Denver is a unique, access-oriented campus community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its forms. Our student population consists of over 50% first generation students and over 50% students of color. We are a designated Hispanic Serving Institution located in downtown Denver.*

*We create an equitable learning and working environment in concert with individuals who consistently demonstrate commitment to equity and inclusion. We greatly value the diverse identities and perspectives of our students, faculty, and staff and recognize that in order to achieve a just and equitable society, diversity must go beyond simple representation. It requires critical inquiry and dialogue and a commitment to action. We strive to provide a culture of belonging for all community members to achieve personal and professional success.*

*MSU Denver is committed to creating and fostering a work environment and culture of belonging; we are proud of the work our employee affinity groups contribute to our culture. For more information on our employee affinity groups please visit this [link](#).*