



A Comprehensive Campaign for  
**MSU DENVER**



[msudenver.edu/roadrunners-rise](https://msudenver.edu/roadrunners-rise)



# From Vision and Passion to Strategy and Action

In 1965, Metropolitan State University of Denver was founded to serve metro Denver's working students. Whether of traditional age or a 45-year-old parent of three, Coloradans from all walks of life could find an accessible, affordable, quality education at "Metro."

Fast-forward to 2025.

Today, MSU Denver is the largest institution on the Auraria Campus, with nearly 18,000 students. Over half of them are among the first generation in their families to attend college. They are also almost all Coloradans, and three-fourths of them will stay in Colorado after graduating, making them a critical source of skilled talent for the state. Like their predecessors, they come to MSU Denver seeking a high-quality education that's affordable and accessible. They come to MSU Denver to get a better job, earn more and fulfill their career aspirations. **They come to MSU Denver to change their lives and those of their families.**

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half of them are among the first generation in their families to attend college. They are also almost all Coloradans, and three-fourths of them will stay in Colorado after graduating, making them a critical source of skilled talent for the state. Like their predecessors, they come to MSU Denver seeking a high-quality education that's affordable and accessible. They come to MSU Denver to get a better job, earn more and fulfill their career aspirations. They come to MSU Denver to change their lives and those of their families.

MSU Denver's vision is to become a national leader in social mobility, demonstrating how to create an effective higher-education model while keeping costs down. To do that, the University has created an ambitious strategic plan that charts a course for student success and academic excellence, civic and economic engagement, diversity and inclusion, and organizational agility and sustainability.

**Roadrunners Rise is how we get there.**

**Roadrunners Rise** is MSU Denver's \$100 million comprehensive fundraising campaign to help fuel its vision of becoming a national leader in social mobility. The following case for support was created with input from across campus, community partners and employers. It zeros in on the University's highest priorities to increase capacity to serve more students with improved services in better facilities while keeping the cost of a degree affordable.

"Our students are the best students in the world. These people are dedicated, committed, hard working — they have grit. Whatever you give, you'll get back multi-fold — that's just the way the universe works. I've been given so much from MSU Denver in terms of knowledge, experience, love and student engagement. It's the best gift I've ever made."

**Dawn Bookhardt, J.D.**  
Former Foundation Board Chair  
2023 Marathon Award Recipient



## A Message From MSU Denver's President



As the only public four-year, modified-open-access university in the state, Metropolitan State University of Denver plays a vital role in preparing Coloradans for the modern workforce.

With more than 90% of the top jobs in Colorado requiring further education and training after completion of high school, postsecondary education can have a profound impact on an individual's earning potential over the course of a career.

We serve nearly 18,000 students of all ages and backgrounds in 100+ majors and 10 graduate programs. And 75% of our 112,000+ alumni stay in Colorado, advancing communities and economies. We are your teachers, your nurses, your mental-health providers, your pilots and your leaders.

Your gifts make it possible for first-generation college students to achieve their dreams. Your gifts support students who are veterans, parents or working their way through college to earn a degree.

Because of our affordable tuition, your generous gifts go farther at MSU Denver. Through transformational support, we will catalyze the development of MSU Denver, our campus, the region and beyond. We invite you to rise with us!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Janine Davidson".

**Janine Davidson, Ph.D.**

President,  
Metropolitan State University of Denver

"MSU Denver becomes even more important in connecting diverse populations into the entire experience of higher education through our strategic plan, so our students can find how they can be bigger than themselves."

**Russell Noles ('81)**

Former Chair  
MSU Denver Board of Trustees





# Academic Excellence in the Heart of the City



## MSU Denver Students

**16,600**

Undergraduate students

**1,182**

Graduate students



**#1**

Undergraduate transfer destination for Coloradans



**58%**

First-generation undergraduate students



**87%**

Students working while pursuing their education (2022)



**75%**

Alumni who remain in Colorado post-graduation



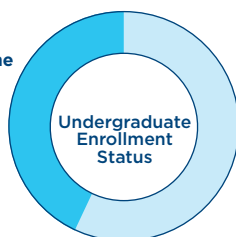
**39%**

Students eligible for the Pell Grant

## Academic Offerings

- 104 majors
- 101 minors
- 10 graduate degree programs
- 44 Pre-K-12 licensure options
- Customizable Individualized Degree Program
- 54 certificate options (graduate and undergraduate)
- 260 microcredentials offered

**42%**  
Part-time



**58%**  
Full-time



**3,773**

Participating in for-credit work-based learning (internships, clinicals, etc.)



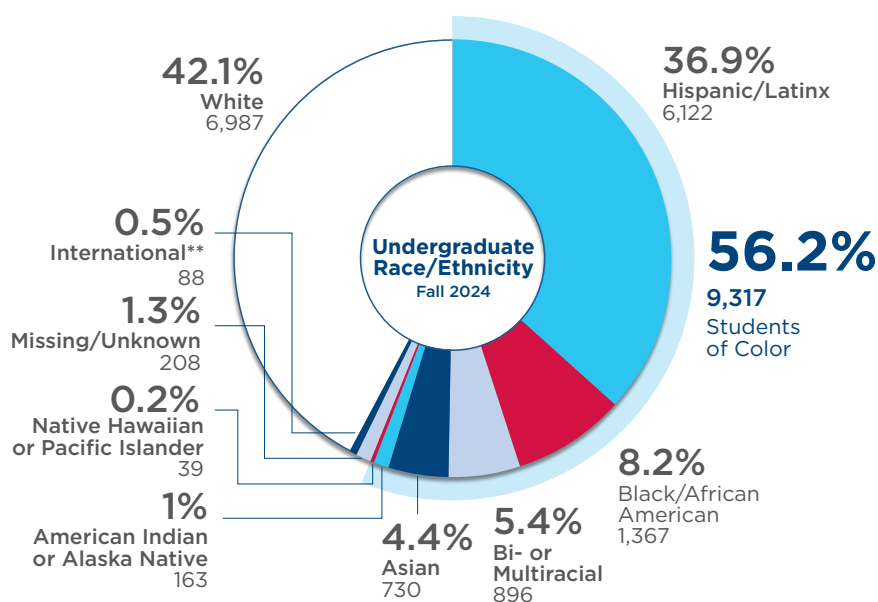
**\$2,572**

Average annual out-of-pocket cost of tuition and fees\* for full-time degree-seeking Colorado residents

MSU Denver graduates earn **>73% more** on average annually compared with high school graduates in Colorado

\* Tuition and fees, after scholarships and grants. Does not include housing, books, loans or work-study.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



\*\* International students are not included in the total undergraduate students of color.



**Seal of Excellence**

Only Colorado institution to earn this Hispanic-servingness distinction



**2023 Fulbright HSI**  
Leader designation,  
U.S. Dept. of State



**Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award**  
11th consecutive year



## Rising Communities and Alumni Spotlights



Justin Darnall never expected to find himself on the brink of making space history. In fact, he didn't even know he wanted a career in aerospace until he got to MSU Denver. After eight years in the Marine Corps, followed by a string of ill-fitting jobs, Darnall used the GI Bill to enroll at MSU Denver in 2016. He majored in Aerospace Systems Engineering through the University's Individualized Degree Program. A self-proclaimed "awful student" in high school, he excelled in college by treating coursework like a job and maintained a 4.0 GPA. Now, as Blue Origin's senior manager of software development for lunar permanence, Darnall is working to make a 240,000-mile return trip to the moon possible — and it all started at MSU Denver.

### **Justin Darnall**

Aerospace Systems Engineering ('19)

Sarena Espinoza has spent six years living her dream as the community-affairs manager for the Colorado Rockies. With decades of softball experience and a Sport Management degree from MSU Denver, she has not only fulfilled her goal of working in sports but is actively giving back to the state of Colorado. "The opportunity to play softball in college — I just couldn't pass it up," Espinoza said. "What really drew me to the University was the Sport Management program. I really wanted to work in sports, and being in a city that had several professional sports teams ... it all just made sense. Everything I am, and everything I've earned and where I'm at in my life now, is because of those decisions and making a leap."

### **Sarena Espinoza**

Sport Management ('18)



Jameer Fitch's MSU Denver story began in 2012 with a plan: Major in Computer Information Systems and graduate alongside Leon Duran ('15), his friend, classmate and fellow U.S. Navy reservist. However, life didn't go as planned and he fell behind. After returning from active-duty deployment, Duran encouraged Fitch to complete his degree. "He literally walked me to the departments and introduced me to everyone, including Dean (Ann) Murphy and Dr. (Janine) Davidson — I knew I had a family to help me finish my degree." Now a two-time MSU Denver alumnus, Fitch credits the entire Roadrunner community for his success as a senior physical security analyst at Comcast and a newly appointed officer in the Navy.

### **Jameer Fitch**

Legal Analytics and Organizational Leadership ('20)  
MBA ('23)



## Rising Community Donor Spotlights



Barbara Grogan's love for MSU Denver started with what she called the University's "courage and conviction" on the issue of providing accessible in-state tuition for residents regardless of immigration status. After making a significant charitable gift to fund MSU Denver scholarships for undocumented students, she was introduced to students who benefited from the donation and started meeting them for lunch regularly. "I got to know MSU Denver through the eyes of students," Grogan said. "They give me hope in our future. MSU Denver is such a marvelous place that feeds my soul. I am profoundly grateful for my ability to participate there."

**Barbara Grogan**  
Foundation Board Member  
Former Chair, Board of Trustees

Molly and Rob (chairman and CEO of IMA Financial Group) Cohen have supported MSU Denver and its mission for decades. Motivated by wanting to help a greater number of hardworking and tenacious MSU Denver students, they expanded the Cohen Pacesetter Program in 2022. "We believe that MSU Denver has what is needed for our city, state and country," Molly Cohen said. "We want to invest in a school where everyone is valued and everyone is hardworking. We will continue to look for hope and light in the world and partner with MSU Denver and the students and athletes who each have their own amazing stories."

**Molly and Rob Cohen**  
Campaign Steering Committee Co-Chairs  
Former Chair, Board of Trustees and Foundation (Rob)



MSU Denver has partnered with Colorado Access and the Colorado Access Foundation to grow a diverse health care workforce that meets Colorado's urgent need for skilled providers. With the demand and need for health care outpacing the current workforce, Annie Lee, president and CEO of Colorado Access and chair of the Colorado Access Foundation board of directors, believes it is a timely, important and impactful time to partner with the University. "Our mission is to support and empower communities through affordable, equitable and quality health care," she said. "MSU Denver reflects our values and connects with our mission, sharing a passion for social justice and health equity. Through this investment, we are contributing to the health care landscape and strengthening the future of behavioral health."

**Colorado Access & Colorado Access Foundation**  
Industry Partner



# Explore These Exciting Funding Opportunities



The Roadrunners Rise Campaign strives to raise \$100M to support four key pillars described below. Each pillar features several initiatives designed through a collaborative process and approved by our leaders. These pillars seek to scale programs that work, improve and expand critical learning environments, and build endowed funds that will provide sustainable funding far into the future. Together, they will fuel MSU Denver's vision of becoming a national leader in social

mobility, transforming the lives of thousands of students and energizing the businesses that hire them.

A significant commitment from philanthropic leaders, alumni, parents and friends is necessary to match the pace of growth now and in our collective future.

**We invite you to join us in helping all Roadrunners Rise.**

1

## **Facilitating Student Success**

**Goal: \$45 Million**

Funding for this pillar provides MSU Denver with the resources needed to serve a diverse student body, where over half identify as students of color and nearly 60% are first-generation college students. Funding helps foster an inclusive community and supports student success through programs like the Cohen Pacesetter Scholarship and the Student Success Endowment, which provide essential financial aid and wraparound services to ensure improved retention and graduation rates.

2

## **Cultivating Inclusive Excellence**

**Goal: \$5 Million**

Funding for this pillar fosters social and economic mobility through initiatives like the Faculty Fellows Program - increasing the number of faculty members from diverse backgrounds reflecting our students - and teaching assistantships that build direct pathways into higher education for underrepresented students, creating an environment that promises a more inclusive, empowering and supportive academic environment for everyone.

3

## **Creating Classroom to Career Pathways**

**Goal: \$15 Million**

This pillar includes the Classroom to Career Hub (C2 Hub), a centralized programmatic and physical space for career development. The C2 Hub engages 100% of MSU Denver and Community College of Denver's 22,000 students, starting when they become students and extending beyond graduation. The C2 Hub allows students to make meaningful career connections, access invaluable opportunities and meet the needs for diverse workforce talent in the ever-evolving job market.

4

## **Addressing Colorado's Talent Pipeline**

**Goal: \$35 Million**

This pillar provides MSU Denver with the funding to address Colorado's evolving workforce needs by offering essential training and credentialing for occupations expected to grow by more than 10% by 2030. The University is focused on prioritizing investment in state-of-the-art facilities and programs to enhance the diverse talent pipeline for sectors such as health care, education, aviation, affordable housing, hospitality and public service.





## Goal One: Facilitating Student Success

MSU Denver proudly serves one of the most diverse groups of higher-education learners in Colorado. Over half of Roadrunners identify as students of color; nearly 60% are the first in their families to obtain a college degree. The average age of Roadrunners is 25 — many are working parents, emancipated youth and veterans. Given their complex lives, many need supports to avoid stopping out of college and to make it to the finish line. **MSU Denver is dedicated to meeting students where they are, addressing their diverse needs and creating an environment where every Roadrunner feels welcome and engaged.**

### OUR GOAL \$45 million

Increase access through endowed funding for scholarships integrated with wrap-around supports, improved advisor-to-student ratios and strengthened community connections.



“Receiving the Grogan Scholarship is the only reason I graduated from college. Period. After immigrating to the United States from Jamaica, I didn’t think I would have the chance to continue my education because the cost of simply just living was so intense. But receiving a scholarship made the previously impossible attainable for me, and I am forever grateful.”

**Damarley Laing**

Fire and Emergency Response (‘24)

### Select Investment Priorities

#### Cohen Pacesetter Program

Molly and Rob Cohen established the Cohen Pacesetter Program because they believe earning a college degree creates generational change. With the understanding that there are many barriers standing in the way of degree completion, the program uniquely addresses the myriad needs encountered throughout the student life cycle.

The Cohen Pacesetter Program supports promising MSU Denver students by creating a community of scholars grounded in a commitment to leadership, service and community. Donors are not only key to providing funding; they are invited to actively participate in the student life cycle by mentoring and helping them access opportunities.

The goal is to raise \$20 million in an endowed fund that will support 80 students in perpetuity, making it the largest privately funded scholarship at MSU Denver and the only one supported by a community of donors.

#### The Student Success Endowment

Research shows that students who participate in a comprehensive program that includes scholarships, wraparound support and mentorship have higher rates of improved mental health, social-emotional development and academic learning, including retention and graduation rates. University data indicate that students engaging in at least three high-engagement practices have a 90% retention rate.

MSU Denver has several proven programs that provide essential support, academic opportunities and community building to our diverse students, contributing to their persistence and completion. However, these programs operate on minimal funding and are limited in the number of students they can serve. Investing in these programs allows MSU Denver to expand services, enhance the quality of support, increase programming and facilitate access to enriching experiences for all Roadrunners.



Learn about all initiatives in this pillar by scanning the QR code



# 2

## Goal Two: Cultivating Inclusive Excellence

MSU Denver is one of the most diverse institutions of higher education in Colorado, with over 55% of its 16,300+ undergraduates identifying as students of color. Given the complex and often-zigzaggy lives of MSU Denver students, many need support both inside and outside the classroom to help them persist and ultimately graduate.

By nurturing an environment in which people of color feel welcomed and supported in every phase of their higher-education journey, MSU Denver will empower students of color and other underrepresented students to achieve personal, academic and professional success and create foundational change in their social and economic mobility.

### OUR GOAL \$5 million

Invest in programs and pathways that improve retention and graduation rates for students of color and increase the recruitment, retention and success of faculty members of color.

### Investment Priorities

#### Faculty Fellows Program

Research shows that students of color feel understood and validated when they receive support from faculty members from similar backgrounds. Currently, MSU Denver has 154 faculty members of color. With support for the Faculty Fellows Program, the goal is to grow this number by four faculty members per year via a combination of retention and recruitment efforts. Additionally, the work of the Faculty Fellows directly or indirectly affects thousands of students and faculty members per year through EDI expertise and liaising, research and analysis, resource creation, programmatic administration and more.

#### Teaching Assistantships for Underrepresented Students

MSU Denver has a robust student-employee program, but unlike many traditional universities, the institution does not have a large-scale teacher assistantship (TA) program. Overall learning effectiveness, including attaining outcome standards and retention of students, has been shown to improve with the use of TAs.

Indeed, MSU Denver students who participate in TA-supported courses are retained at an average rate 5% higher than the general population.

Currently, MSU Denver employs a minimum of 200 TAs per year. With additional investment, MSU Denver could scale the TA program to 300 per year, benefiting up to 20% of the MSU Denver student population. This program could have a profound impact on students and could pay for itself through increased student-retention rates.

#### Professional Development in Inclusive Teaching Practices

Given that 75% of MSU Denver faculty members are not people of color, it is important for the University to provide professional development broadly across the institution to ensure that all students, but particularly students of color, experience inclusive classrooms that encourage them to excel, persist and graduate. With campaign support, the University could sustain existing professional-development offerings by implementing a minimum of two to four cohorts per year, each serving 20 faculty members.



“The Faculty Fellows Program is such a great opportunity to prepare you for the tenure track.”

**Felix Flores, Ph.D.**  
Wilton Flemon  
Postdoctoral Fellowship



Learn about all initiatives in this pillar by scanning the QR code





## Goal Three: Creating Classroom to Career Pathways

With over half of all MSU Denver students coming from homes that are unfamiliar with college, many University students lack the personal and professional networks to obtain a competitive internship or land their first career-related job. Meanwhile, labor shortages and skill mismatches cost Colorado \$46 billion in gross domestic product annually.

Enter MSU Denver's Classroom to Career Hub (C2 Hub), an innovative solution to these challenges. The C2 Hub revolutionizes how the University collaborates with industry leaders to meet the demand for diverse workforce talent by connecting students with invaluable opportunities in an ever-evolving job market.

### OUR GOAL \$15 million

The C2 Hub is a virtual and a physical space where students, alumni and employers converge to learn, network, mentor and connect with opportunities.



"I met with my C2 Hub career advisor at least monthly to strategize about my next steps. In my job search, he helped me set goals, provided resources and was just generally encouraging and supportive. These efforts turned into a full-time job as a graphic designer for Tetra Tech, a global engineering-and-consulting firm focused on environmental solutions."

**Christina Shukie**  
Communication Design ('25)

### Investment Priorities

#### The C2 Hub Building

MSU Denver's C2 Hub will occupy 25,000 square feet on the second floor of the campus' new development along Auraria Parkway, directly across from Ball Arena.

Currently, the C2 Hub's services are scattered across campus and somewhat hard to find. Space, financial and capacity constraints limit it to serving just 25% of MSU Denver and Community College of Denver students. The new space will bring together these programs so that students will have a central location for all their career needs, where they can meet with employers, access mentors and participate in professional networking events.

The new building will be a vibrant, full-service Career Hub on the Auraria Campus. Employers, students, alumni, faculty members and staff members will be able to convene there to explore and actualize career expectations. The new C2 Hub will be able to serve all 17,000+ MSU Denver students and all of Community College of Denver's 5,000+ students, ensuring that 100% of these students can access career-development resources.

#### C2 Hub Programming

Workforce development is fast-paced, and industry needs can change quickly, creating a dynamic environment for students seeking to be prepared and industry-ready upon graduation. The C2 Hub will fuel Colorado's economy and fill talent gaps with skilled, work-ready, diverse Coloradans. It will also connect employers with one another and with faculty members to solve talent-pipeline challenges. Through informed curricula, industry-level convenings and hassle-free processes to connect with higher education, **the C2 Hub will be a top destination for Colorado employers.**

Investing in C2 Hub programming is a powerful solution that creates flexibility in developing and scaling high-impact career programs and practices such as:

- Mentoring
- Career discovery, planning- and job-search support
- Professional development opportunities
- Graduate-school support
- Internship resources



Learn about all initiatives in this pillar by scanning the QR code



# 4

## Goal Four: Addressing Colorado's Talent Pipeline

MSU Denver is at the forefront of addressing Colorado's evolving workforce needs. The 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report highlights 10 occupations expected to grow by more than 10% by 2030, including healthcare support, community and social service, educational instruction and technology and small businesses. These vital roles are central to Colorado's economy and significantly impact public well-being and safety, with most requiring postsecondary credentials. MSU Denver is ready to provide the essential training and credentialing to meet these demands and drive solutions.

### OUR GOAL \$35 million

To expand the number of students graduating from high-demand programs and to improve the quality of their learning experience and preparedness while benefiting our communities.



"The students here are dedicated, energetic, and are passionate about getting their degrees and health care. We have to fill the workforce pipeline, and if MSU Denver can help make that happen, we are in."

**Gina and Frank Day**  
Donors



Learn about all initiatives in this pillar by scanning the QR code

### Select Investment Priorities

#### Health Institute

One-third of all MSU Denver students are enrolled in health-related programs. The Health Institute is a programmatic approach and 70,000-square-foot facility that bring together 10 health-related programs while increasing capacity. By offering opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, we are better preparing students for the modern workplace. Together with various industry partnerships, the Health Institute is working to address Colorado's health care workforce crisis.

#### Affordable Housing Institute

The U.S. housing and rental market has experienced drastic price increases over the past decade. As a result, Colorado's affordable-housing industry has seen a rush of new funding sources and an increasing number of employment opportunities. The institute is housed in the College of Business, and the vision for it is to become a unique interdisciplinary program that focuses on the people operating affordable-housing complexes, supporting their residents while also educating those who finance them.

#### Institute for Public Service

MSU Denver launched the Institute for Public Service to build on its legacy of educating and inspiring the next generation of civic leaders. It aims to inspire more Colorado students to consider careers in public service, where they can contribute their diverse perspectives and experiences to policy, governance and service. The institute plans to grow the number of students accessing local, statewide and federal internships while enrolled

#### Office of Education Solutions

The Office of Education Solutions' goal is to provide support to people in pre-K-12 education by working hand-in-hand with practitioners, policymakers and families for solutions to teaching, curriculum, equity and other persistent problems in the educational setting. Additional funding allows the office to scale programs that provide support to current and future pre-K-12 educators, such as:

- Trauma-Informed Practices,
- Call Me MiSTER
- The Colorado STEM Ecosystem
- The Global Seal of Biliteracy



CHANGEMAKERS  
WANTED



## Make Your Impact

To achieve this vision of growth, impact, quality and affordability, MSU Denver needs everyone — students, staff members, faculty members, parents, alumni and community members — to lean into this moment and give. No matter the size of your gift, great or small, together we can make a difference.

Ways you can help:

- Contact Advancement to speak with a gift officer.
- Make a gift online to any of these initiatives.
- Consider leaving your legacy through a planned gift.
- Inquire about naming opportunities.
- Check to see if your organization will match your gift.

By investing in our future, we create a legacy of support that we can all celebrate. United by our mission to foster social mobility for students, their families and communities across Colorado, we ensure that

**all Roadrunners  
will rise.**

“Our community and economy need MSU Denver to thrive. This is the most diverse university in the state, the most affordable on the Front Range, and it offers the highest-quality education — in many programs, MSU Denver is best-in-class. Graduates stay in Colorado and form the backbone of our economy. An investment in MSU Denver is an investment in our future.”

**Ferd Belz**

Former Foundation Board Chair  
Campaign Chair



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