

Metropolitan State University of Denver

**Office of  
University Events**

**Annual Report**



20

25

# A Letter from our Executive Director



2025 was, without a doubt, another tremendous year of growth for the Office of University Events at Metropolitan State University of Denver. If I had to capture the spirit of this year in three words, they would be **elevate**, **overcome**, and **celebrate**. These themes reflect the events and projects we brought to life with the goal of inspiring and engaging our Roadrunner community. And in no year has this been more fitting than 2025 – the year University Advancement launched MSU Denver’s first-ever fundraising campaign and proudly reached our \$100 million goal. If I were to add one more word to describe this year, it would be gratitude.

My team hears me use the word **elevate** often; it has been our calling card since day one. Building an events team from the ground up comes with a learning curve, but in 2025, with a strong foundation in place, we didn’t just execute events; we truly elevated them. My love for adding a special touch, a little “rah-rah,” if you will, certainly plays a role (you’ll see plenty of that in the décor photos throughout this report!). But the elevation is also evident in our strengthened AV-IT capabilities, our refined guest communication strategies, and the thoughtful ways we enhance the experience at every turn.

**Overcome** is a theme I might not have chosen at the start of the year, but I’m proud it became part of our story. Higher education across the country has been navigating significant shifts due to changes in state and federal budgets, and MSU Denver is no exception. Yet through strategic thinking, creative budgeting, and unwavering support from colleagues, we delivered one successful event after another. I’m also thrilled to share that MSU Denver continues to attract positive attention – I regularly receive feedback and inquiries from peer institutions who are eager to learn from our work.

After a year filled with challenges and opportunities for growth, my fellow University Advancement leaders and I have been especially mindful of the importance of **celebration**. In fact, celebrating our wins has been a core value for our division this year, and we have so much to celebrate. The Office of University Events hosted 12 presidential-level events, supported more campuswide events than ever before, and led the Launch Party for the public phase of the Roadrunner Rise campaign. Each of these accomplishments, and everything in between, gives us reason to celebrate.

As we look ahead to 2026, I’m energized by the opportunity to continue building on our university-wide commitment to Excellence. I’m especially excited for our team to lead the execution of the Campaign Celebration in June, one of the biggest moments of the year. I hope to see you there and at many of our other signature events.

Go Roadrunners!

**Jessica Fernandez**

# About the Office of University Events



## Mission Statement

Elevate the brand and reputation of the university by planning, coordinating and executing signature and university-wide events that engage our internal and external communities, while creating an inclusive, educational experience, positioning MSU Denver as a leader in the Denver metro area and beyond.

## Advancement Positioning and Work

The University Events team is strategically placed within the University Advancement department, as it aligns well with our mission to elevate the brand and reputation of the University. This is accomplished through our team's hosting of presidential-level events and providing assistance for other University Advancement events.

## 2025 Office of University Events Staff

- **Jessica Fernandez**, Executive Director of University Events
- **Lesley Colwell**, Associate Director of University Events
- **David Sharman**, Associate Director of Audiovisual Operations
- **Toby Hatcher**, Assistant Director of Event Design
- **Ned H.**, Assistant Director of Budget, Data and Coordination
- **Courtney Kakes**, Assistant Director of Event Marketing and Comms.
- **Cairn Carr**, Events Coordinator

# OUE Impact at a Glance 2025

Total Events Hosted: 12

## Event Metrics Overview

Total Event Attendees

31,491

YOY Increase in Event Attendance

24.4%

Average Event Satisfaction Score

8.3/10

YOY Increase in Event Satisfaction

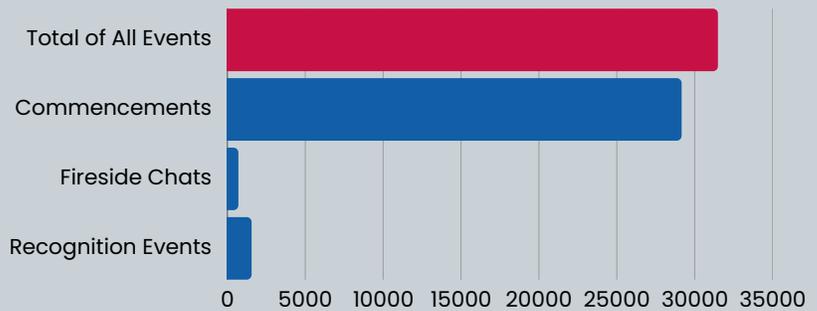
4.3%

## Email Performance

16.04% Total CTR\*

8.97% CTR YOY Increase

## Attendee Breakdown



## Site Performance

53,176

Engaged Sessions

8.1%

YOY Increase in Organic Search Sessions

7,498

Sessions From Email Traffic

## Ranked Event Elements

### Most Important for Guests

1. Presidential Remarks
2. Food and Beverages
3. Student Speakers

## Highest Event Attendance

16,797 Spring Commencement

## Highest Ranked Event

9.86/10

President's Speaker Series with David Ignatius

\*Click Through Rate

# CAVEA Theater

## Impact at a Glance

2025

The CAVEA Theater boasted an impressive year, with its **highest revenue-generating year ever**. These results further solidify the continued support of MSU Denver in this important space on campus. The CAVEA Team also ushered in new and improved strategies for attracting and retaining clients. Marketing materials like seasonal greeting cards, as well as its first brochure, were developed this year to continue to enhance CAVEA Theater's recognition and reputation, both on and off campus.

### Client Totals

**162**

Total  
CAVEA  
Clients

**136**

Total Internal  
Clients

**26**

Total External  
Clients

### Approval Ratings

**100%**

Clients Would  
Recommend the  
CAVEA

**100%**

Clients were  
'Extremely  
Satisfied' with  
their Event  
Execution

### YOY Increases

**36.8%**

YOY Increase in  
External  
CAVEA Clients

**15.2%**

YOY Increase  
in CAVEA  
Revenue

### Testimonial

*"The CAVEA and MSU Denver staff went above and beyond in their execution of our event. Their effort helped make the event a winner in all aspects."  
- Cody Bush, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference*

# Signature Event Spotlights

## President's Fireside Chat with David Ignatius



Our President's Speaker Series with David Ignatius was a real standout event, and it received the highest praise from event attendees of all our events this year.

"Bringing thought leaders like David to campus is just one of the ways MSU Denver helps students—and our broader community—stay informed and engaged with the world around us," said MSU Denver President Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

## Fireside Chat with Monica M. Márquez, chief justice of the Colorado Supreme Court



Record-breaking would be one of the best ways to describe this event. We had the most attendees and earned our highest approval ratings for a Fireside Chat yet.

One attendee said, "This was a well-done event. I liked everything. This was my first such event, and I didn't realize how well put together everything was. I will be attending more of these Fireside Chats now."

## Roadrunners Rise Campaign Launch Party



The Vice President of Advancement, Christine Marquez-Hudson, spoke at the event and said, “We are helping our students fulfill their dream, become all that they can be, at an accessible, affordable cost, and at a time when we need time more than ever.”

The Roadrunners Rise Campaign Launch party was one of the most momentous events in MSU Denver’s history, and it led to reaching our \$100 million goal!

## Fireside Chat with Gloria Steinem



Gloria Steinem welcomed President Davidson into her home for a Fireside Chat in April. This was the first fully remote Fireside Chat event that our team hosted. It bolstered excellent RSVP numbers, fantastic feedback and some fun snacks for in-person attendees.

One excited attendee said, “As an alumna, I was thrilled with the event as a whole. Well managed, easy to access, and loved the one-on-one aspect with the guest! Plus, it’s Gloria Steinem, which was a fan girl moment for me!

## President Davidson’s Welcome Back



“Bringing in the history of MSU Denver and how we’ve weathered difficult times, and honoring the foundation board members and the story that was told was excellent. Plus, President Davidson and Matt Makley rocked. Overall, an outstanding event infused with great intention and powerful messaging,” said one happy attendee after the event.

This was the very best way to kick off the academic year!

# Innovation, Growth & Improvement

In 2025, the Office of University Events continued to strengthen its foundation through thoughtful innovation and steady growth. These improvements set the stage for even greater impact, ensuring that our work remains responsive, creative, and aligned with the evolving needs of our Roadrunner community.

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## **CAVEA Theater Client Pipeline**

The CAVEA has not only seen physical improvements, like replacing the carpet and curtains, but it also has received some procedural updates. An organized approach for external client outreach was developed, documentation was improved through the addition of forecast and pending payments for more accurate planning, leads are continuing to be nurtured with seasonal greeting cards, and CAVEA's first brochure was developed and utilized at a meeting with VISIT Denver this fall.

## **Marshal Training and Resources**

Commencement marshal resources and training were improved not only in presentation but also in substance, using a variety of different media to ensure that they were better prepared to assist the OUE team at Commencement.

## **Canvas Course for Commencement**

The Canvas platform was utilized to better communicate key tasks and deadlines that they needed to complete before crossing the Commencement stage in December. 1082 students engaged with the platform during the Fall 2025 semester.



# Campus Partnerships

The OUE team helps with many other events on campus through support that includes assisting with decor, event signage, audiovisual operations, planning volunteer roles and responsibilities, organizing major priorities, programming, stage management, RSVP tracking and staffing. Below is a list of events that the OUE team has assisted with this year.

- **Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Breakfast**
- **Day of Giving**
- **Rachel B. Noel Professorship Event**
- **Exploring Economic Freedom with Steve Forbes**
- **Community Collaboration Summit**
- **Homecoming Tailgate**
- **Presidential 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Luncheon**

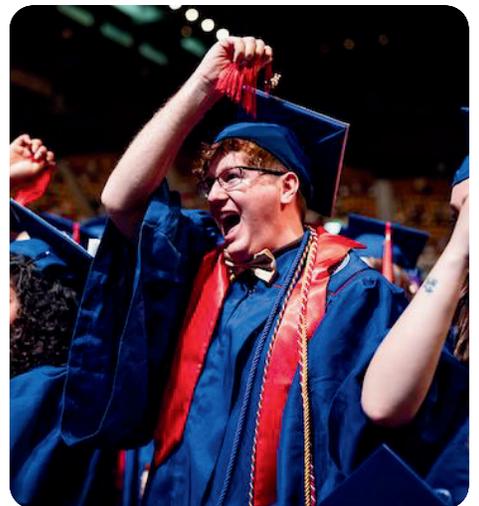




# Our Favorite 2025 Photos







# A Look Ahead

## Our 2026 Snapshot

As we look ahead to 2026, the Office of University Events is energized by the opportunities that lie before us. With the Roadrunner Rise campaign entering its celebratory phase, this year will be defined by connection, creativity, and a renewed commitment to Excellence across every event we produce. Our team is already hard at work planning experiences that will strengthen the sense of community that makes MSU Denver such a vibrant place to learn and lead.

One of the highlights of the year will be the Campaign Celebration in June 2026, a signature moment that will bring together students, faculty, staff, donors, and friends to honor the collective achievement of reaching our \$100 million goal. Alongside this milestone event, we will continue to elevate our presidential-level engagements and the special touches that have become our hallmark.

With a strong foundation and a clear vision, 2026 promises to be a year of meaningful impact, joyful celebration, and continued growth for our team and the entire Roadrunner community.

## Acknowledgements

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the many colleagues and partners who helped bring our events to life this year. And a big Roadrunner shoutout to our phenomenal student employees — Kyna, Liam, Sanaa, and Tanner — for their hard work, positivity, and unwavering support. We couldn't have done it without you.

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