

STRATEGIC PLANNING | PHASE 2

VISION TEAM REPORTS

EDUCATE FOR THE FUTURE



University of Colorado **Denver**

THEME

EDUCATE FOR THE FUTURE

CO-CHAIRS

- **Rebecca Kantor** | Dean, School of Education and Human Development (in memoriam)
- **Michael “Bodhi” Rogers** | Professor and Chair, Physics, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

TEAM MEMBERS

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Facilitation Team:

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What We Aspire To Look Like In 2030

Our vision for educating the future is grounded in our understanding of the many ways our students are diverse. Some are looking for a room in the new residence hall to have a campus experience, some are older students with families of their own who will access our campus but continue to live at home, **and** many are first-gen undergraduates. We are richly diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability. Some of our students are veterans **and** some are already in their careers and looking for continued professional learning. Who are we designing a CU Denver 2030 campus for? The answer must and can only be: all of these students.

A second driver for our thinking is our collective commitment to success and degree attainment as a social justice commitment to our students. Here you will see our integration of the academic and student success parts of the CU Denver experience. In 2030, we envision our campus as a place where students participate in shaping their pathway to earning a degree or earning credentials and certificates following their passions and the needs dictated by their lives. The overall theme of our proposal is to be known for our flexibility, willingness to cut cost burden by accepting as many credits as possible on the way in, and diversity of ways to get to the same degree or certificate learning outcomes. With as much variability as we have among our students, we believe this flexibility will lead to a much-increased success and degree attainment rate.

Lastly, our proposal includes ideas that have gained strength nationally: building social and professional networks with our students that last a career and lifetime, educating the whole student including their mental wellness, and offering courses that are high quality pedagogy and innovative hybrid designs.



What We Aspire To Look Like In 2030

WHERE WE EXCEL

While CU Denver has elements of our vision, we need to bring these elements together in thoughtful, intentional, and meaningful ways. For example, we already accept many of the credits we are talking about, but they are not messaged as a distinctive part of who we are.

We already have an experiential learning office, but we need to ask each and every college to partner with them to reach each and every student. All means all. Right now, the students who can take advantage of opportunity do, and those who don't, get left behind.

Our reorganization lines up well for these goals—A Provost who will have both the academic program and student success as part of their purview. A new outward facing partnership set of goals that will feed the idea of the network as well as help us keep an ear on what our stakeholders see as those critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Our digital pedagogy progress has been strong these past few years and COVID certainly accelerated it. We have a new digital strategist coming in; we propose we maintain and innovate for the future the hybridity we now have and describe it as a way to be flexible for our students. We believe we also need to figure out how to offer campus life with hybridity as well!

WHERE WE STRUGGLE

We need to create a faculty and staff culture, an infrastructure, and institutional policies that support the idea of flexibility. For some, this orientation comes easily; for others, it feels very challenging to be flexible when the culture and structure has been one of checking boxes. Our collective experience with the service centers is that “no” comes more easily than “yes.”

Faculty culture has to shift too. For some, giving credit as students arrive, means “they will take fewer courses with me.” Degree attainment has to be the priority goal. Reducing cost burden is a top priority. Faculty are also concerned with being supported to develop their courses with high quality pedagogy and hybridity. We need to support Michael Lightener (CU Denver President for Academic Affairs) who is working on changing the intellectual property rules for courses and curriculum development; if we invest heavily in courses, only to lose them when faculty move on, that would be an issue. Shared intellectual property makes good sense and is the norm around the country.



Goal 1: LynxPartners!

We partner with our diverse students to shape learning pathways to certificates and degrees that reflect their lives and passions and provide maximum access, flexibility, equity, and inclusion while also reducing cost burden.

Our undergraduate and graduate students are diverse in so many ways: some arrive after high school and live in the residential halls; some are older, returning students with jobs and families and live in their own homes; many are first-gen; many are bilingual in Spanish; some arrive with an AAVAS or credits toward a degree; some are international. We also have students looking to earn credentials or certificates to achieve their career aspirations. Who are we designing the CU Denver 2030 campus for? The answer can only be all of them!

To meet all students and offer them pathways to success, CU Denver's 2030 academic and co-curricular experience is characterized by flexibility, choice, and student-centered policies that support success, reduce student cost burden, and invite students to partner and have voice in their educational experience with support from faculty and advisors. There are many paths to all of our CU certificates and degrees. The degree outcomes are defined by the faculty—this is not the individually structured degree. This is offering students different ways to build a pathway to get to their certificates, degrees, or anything in-between.

CU Denver students, whether seeking their first degree right out of high school, or more mature, first-gen undergraduates returning to finish their bachelor's degree, students seeking graduate degrees, or professionals seeking further learning, are invited to have a role in shaping their own pathways to credentials, certificates, and degrees with access to a variety of traditional and new learning experiences that include learning modules, stackable credentials, and flexible options alongside existing semester-based schedules. Revised policies for assessing and counting credit from many prior learning sources (e.g., dual enrollment, AP, credit for work experience, credit for prior learning, credit from prior institutions) will reduce cost and facilitate success for students on their learning pathways. Retention and graduation are a good business model even if we allow more credit to come in on the front end.



Goal 1: LynxPartners!

STRATEGY 1.1

Create a campus infrastructure and culture that supports sustainable flexibility across academic units and service centers with academic units defining the appropriate (per financial aid rules) number of credits as possible on the front-end as students arrive. The “Welcome Center” (as opposed to “Transfer Center”) would be responsible for helping students new to college, as well as those joining us with some college experience, bring in as much credit as possible to reduce their cost burden. “Gatekeeping” courses and required prerequisite courses could continue to be one option for demonstrating necessary skills for success in a major, with competency assessment another option. An ecosystem of support that builds on students’ strengths includes a Summer Bridge Program for incoming students that provides them with a Coach/Navigator who helps them find resources, manage relationships, **and** navigate the system. Assess for math and writing upon arrival to provide appropriate support.

INITIATIVES

- 1.1.1** Strengthen the ecosystem of support (including learning communities, coaches, mentors, and tutors) for students to learn to manage choices, be comfortable having and using their voices. These are not “natural skills” for any student and must be taught and learned.
- 1.1.2** Revise policies for assessing and counting credit from many prior learning sources (e.g., dual enrollment, AP, credit for work experience, credit for prior learning, credit from prior institutions) which will reduce student cost burden and facilitate success for students on their learning pathways. Identify all sources of potential credit for prior learning, work experience, and co-curricular learning. Include credit for work experience, credit by assessment, relevant military training; units and their programs will figure out what works for them and will be mindful of financial aid restrictions.
- 1.1.3** Define micro-certificates, micro-credentials, and certificates that can be earned as standalone achievements or stacked towards degree attainment.
- 1.1.4** Work with CU system to create a unique CU Denver transcript (right now a common transcript exists across campuses). For example, competency-based transcripts along with course-based transcripts allow determining course prerequisite completion by assessing competencies or by completing identified prerequisite courses.
- 1.1.5** Reimagine the language, and therefore the culture and identities we create on our campus (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Fifth-year Senior, Non-Degree Seeking student, Non-Traditional Student, Transfer Student, undeclared major, probation, etc.) to be more assets oriented and maintain motivation.
- 1.1.6** Consider creating “Markers of Progress” toward a degree to incorporate certificates of smaller pieces of accomplishment (e.g., certificate of completion of general education requirements) to maintain motivation. Award an AA/AS on the way to a BA/BS. Students who step out with a sense of accomplishment are more likely to return. Create “return and finish” programs.
- 1.1.7** Invest in advising to support students on flexible learning paths. Advisors who aren’t checking boxes need coaching skills to help students develop a vision for their university experience/career life design and lead them/scaffold them in making choices. Ensure a sustainable advising ecosystem in which student-to-advisor ratios are balanced and align with professional recommendations. Develop procedural and budgetary processes for growing advising staff along with growth in the student population.
- 1.1.8** Improve systems for Advisors to manage various degree pathways.



Goal 2: LynxFlex Courses!

At CU Denver, we offer courses that use a variety of high-quality pedagogies and modalities with student choice and flexibility the hallmark to meet the varying needs of our diverse students' lives.

STRATEGY 2.1

Incentivize and reward faculty for using a variety of high-quality pedagogies and modalities in their teaching with choice and flexibility the hallmark. Use campus assets like Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, ThingStudio, the Digital Pedagogy Lab, and the Learning, Educational Technology, Teaching, and Scholarship committee of the Faculty Assembly to define and create the bars for high quality. Encourage Primary Units to build incentives and rewards into annual review, merit, reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Require flexible, high quality, and inclusive pedagogical practices that are culturally sustaining and focused on DEI goals.

INITIATIVES

- 2.1.1** Represent and model whole student development by providing for whole person development among faculty, staff, and administrators through work-life policies.
- 2.1.2** Build capacity of all faculty and staff who interact with students to have time to interact and teach in ways that support whole student development.
- 2.1.3** Reimagine career services as a place that creates a lifelong learning relationship with students not just an exit strategy. Intentionally work to reach all students, not just those who have the social capital resources to access the services.
- 2.1.4** As much as possible, take down the walls between D1, D2, and D3 - a course, a certificate, and a program are equally CU quality. Remove barriers for students, faculty, and leaders to expand their enterprises.
- 2.1.5** Expand new timescapes to add to the 15-week semester like the 8-week-long classes, low-residency options, "flipped" classes that meet on weekends, etc. Consider half-credit and one-credit courses that "stack" to the equivalence of a three-credit course.
- 2.1.6** Make the culture shift at the administrative and IT level: ensuring that systems (registrar, billing, IT) are adjusted to accommodate flexible enrollments, for example, and that technology purchases are in alignment with diversity and inclusion objectives.
- 2.1.7** Award grants/scholarships to faculty for innovative work in DEI pedagogy.
- 2.1.8** Provide ongoing professional development for faculty and staff around anti-racism/classism/homophobia/etc. as well as teaching in the key of DEI. This training should include our lecturer community.
- 2.1.9** Help students understand how to navigate work cultures by enhancing work with the career center through course presentations, seminars, workshops and through the development of discipline-specific professional development seminars.



Goal 3: LynxedIn!

Promise every student experiential learning, beginning with a reimagined general education core that uses interdisciplinarity to learn about critical social problems. This reimagined core would exist as an option alongside GT Pathways and existing categorically organized general education curriculum. Experiential learning continues with opportunities in their professional fields as part of their academic program, where they will develop and enhance skills identified by industry and non-profit leaders as critical to success in the workplace. Design ways to incorporate workplace learning into the curriculum for students already working in their field. Again, use intentionality to reach out to every student.

CU Denver 2030 prepares students with skills (e.g., collaboration, problem solving, writing, resilience, digital skills, critical thinking) deemed critical to success in the workplace and in life. These skills are cultivated, assessed, and documented through certificates in both the formal academic and co-curricular contexts of campus. CU Denver 2030 recognizes both the power of the formal academic curriculum as well as the wider co-curricular life on campus as learning grounds for skills. Industry leaders and employers are asking us to attend to these skills as part of career readiness.

CU Denver 2030 promises every student experiential learning to achieve their professional aspirations—on campus and with our partners—through internships, apprenticeships, practica, and student employment. These experiences are critical for readiness for work in those fields and for some students offer a better context for learning than the classroom. We work with each student to figure out what works with their particular situation. For students who are already professionals, we incorporate their workplace learning into their curriculum.

We propose to reimagine the general education core curriculum to offer an option to study significant social problems through interdisciplinary lenses. Theme-based options with a focus on significant social problems (quality of schools as a systemic racism issue, immigration, voter suppression, climate change, etc.) will align general education and disciplinary competencies. Competency mapping will see where competencies are addressed so every course can touch some of them. All of our programs should address the need for knowledge, skills, and dispositions, but does not necessarily mean every course will address each one. In reimagining the general education core as an option, we need to support the Colorado GT Pathways program and students who would be better served with the current categorical organization of the general education. Again, flexibility and choice are the watchwords.

Recent events (Boulder, violence against Asian Americans, the continual dissemination of vitriol and misinformation) weigh heavily upon all our minds. The Chancellor has asked us to think boldly, and we believe “health and wellbeing” and “citizenship” are vitally important initiatives as we move forward as a community. The health and wellness of students, staff, and faculty, as well as the concepts of citizenship and community are at the core of Educate for the Future, and could yield truly innovative, holistic, and signature initiatives.



Goal 3: LynxedIn!

STRATEGY 3.1

Ensure that the reimagined general education core is designed intentionally to connect with all of the varied programs, majors, and perspectives at CU Denver and that all of the varied programs, majors, and perspectives at CU Denver see how they can connect to the general education core.

INITIATIVES

- 3.1.1** Help students see the connections between the skills they are learning alongside the content they are learning and the dispositions they are building.
- 3.1.2** Think critically and creatively about how all lived experiences can be integrated and taught relative to different disciplines.
- 3.1.3** Invest in faculty groups interested in coordinating theme-based clusters that intentionally welcome all of the varied programs, majors, and perspectives at CU Denver to connect with the general education core theme-based clusters.
- 3.1.4** Expand engagement with the Salazar Wellness Center (e.g., ongoing workshops on mental wellness, conflict resolution, and intervention for some sort of credit).
- 3.1.5** Design “Modules” for citizenship/values/community/mental wellness.
- 3.1.6** These might include meditation for mental wellness, fatigue, balancing work/life/studies. These days could feature guest lectures, art, musical performances, and are a great opportunity to include DEI programming. This could also include various partnerships with the Anschutz campus.
- 3.1.7** Another concept to consider is ‘safety’. This is especially relevant when paired with DEI concepts such as social justice and inclusivity. Students, faculty, and staff should be able to feel truly safe in a shared community experience.
- 3.1.8** Teach courses on misinformation and how to discern truth and facts from the constant barrage of falsity and speculation.
- 3.1.9** Reimagine experiential learning as a critical part of the student experience where we partner with students to identify opportunities that enhance their career aspirations while breaking down boundaries in access to opportunities.
- 3.1.10** Create systems (e.g., e-portfolios, Domain of One’s Own) for identifying, assessing tracking, documenting, sharing growth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for every student.
- 3.1.11** Re-examine GPA requirements that are barriers for various co-curricular experiences.
- 3.1.12** Consider inter-disciplinary linked courses with shared service components.
- 3.1.13** Ask Schools and Colleges to amplify their research and creative activity opportunities for undergraduates.
- 3.1.14** Award faculty workload credit for courses such as directed research, practica, and independent studies for undergraduates.



Goal 3: LynxedIn!

STRATEGY 3.2

All means all. Create access for all students and not only for students with personal, time, or financial resources to access opportunities.

INITIATIVES

- 3.2.1** Offer scholarships for students who want to study abroad or do internships or service experiences.
- 3.2.2** Design a system that includes support for students who are working full time.
- 3.2.3** Design a system that includes support for students who have families.
- 3.2.4** Create experiential learning opportunities that can be experienced in different sized packages (instead of a summer long research experience or service experience, can the same outcome be achieved with a few hours per week over many semesters?).



Goal 4: LynxNet!

Intentionally build culturally sustaining, social and professional learning Networks with students, faculty, alumni, staff, industry partners, and non-profit partners that amplify our inclusive, highly diverse campus and invite the alum and partners in the network to see CU Denver as a learning home for their continued learning. Engage with partners in ways that are meaningful to them and give voice to their issues.

We will intentionally partner with every student at CU Denver 2030 to develop a social, learning, and professional network for each student, which will consist of their fellow students, alumni, staff, industry partners, and non-profit partners. Networks of mentors for lifelong learning and career support are critical to personal and professional success. For the alumni and stakeholders in the network the LynxFlex Ecosystem is seen as a learning home for them and all CU students across their careers and lifespan. Campus life is designed to be hybrid so that all students have access to it. Students develop social and professional learning networks that support their academic success and sustain their lives and careers through all of the various options that factor into the reimagined general education core and exist within academic certification and degree programs, and/or campus/co-curricular life experiences.

STRATEGY 4.1

Develop the network through partnerships with high schools, two-year institutions, alumni, community, and business/non-profit leaders. Create services, programming, events, and networking opportunities that will motivate current and future alumni to engage with the University long after they graduate and across their careers and lives. Expand initiatives like the Mentor Collective and other efforts related to mentoring and peer support.

INITIATIVES

- 4.1.1** Shift the career center paradigm from “career planning” to “life design.” Coach students to create a vision for their lives with steps into their first career or next steps in their current career.
- 4.1.2** Promote sustainable faculty-student connections that persist post-graduation.
- 4.1.3** Promote CU resources available for alumni. Create an “Alumni concierge” role.
- 4.1.4** Expand formal continuing education and its relationship to the D1 program.
- 4.1.5** Create Alumni interactions infused throughout the curriculum.
- 4.1.6** Expand outreach to local High Schools and Community Colleges – create a pathway into the University – “LynxPathway”?
- 4.1.7** Support transition to work and promote continuing connection to the university.
- 4.1.8** Enhance curriculum for depth of career readiness preparation across student lifecycle.
- 4.1.9** Create more partnerships with companies, non-profit organizations, governments, and institutions.
- 4.1.10** Have industry-based/sponsored class projects wherever possible.
- 4.1.11** Think critically about how all diverse lived-experiences can be integrated and taught inside courses relating to different disciplines and across disciplines.
- 4.1.12** Incentivize faculty, staff, and student work on producing this knowledge.



ABOUT THE PROCESS

ABOUT THE PROCESS

LETTER FROM THE STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Chancellor Marks,

When you charged our strategic planning steering committee you told us that CU Denver has built incredible momentum in the last 50 years and that there is great pride among our community about our progress. I was also struck by your comment that across your 100 Days of Listening tour nobody told you that we were done, but rather, our community is ready to capitalize on our unique strengths to become the type of university our city, state, and nation need.

During Phase 2 of our strategic plan, we brought together a team of 130+ exceptional students, faculty, staff, and friends that broadly represented the university community. They were organized in eight Vision Teams and a Steering Committee and asked to engage in an inclusive, innovative process to envision our future.

In the following pages you will find their work – the ideas conceptualized, articulated, and conveyed by our own community. These are dreams of what CU Denver can become by 2030 and high-level strategies for how we might get there. The work is phenomenal and I could not be prouder of our team!

I am immensely impressed by, and grateful for, the work of our Vision Teams, Steering Committee, and the Comcast Media Technology Center/Inworks Design Innovation team that facilitated this process with creativity, flexibility, and unmatched professionalism. I am confident that their work delivers on your charge to dream big and determine how we can carve out our unique and impactful future.

I look forward to working with you over the next several weeks to take these ideas and shape our community's very best thinking into a cohesive strategy for CU Denver that will guide us over the next decade. I could not be more excited for our future, and truly believe we will be the university the world needs in 2030!

Sincerely,

Marty Dunn

*Dean, College of Engineering, Design and Computing
Chair, Strategic Planning Steering Committee*

ABOUT THE PROCESS

BACKGROUND

CU Denver embarked on an ambitious [strategic planning process](#) in January 2021 to create a bold, exciting vision and strategy that will differentiate CU Denver by 2030.

After Chancellor Michelle Marks' [100 Days of Listening](#) tour, it was clear that our university community has tremendous pride and momentum, as well as a strong desire to launch CU Denver to national recognition as a leading public urban research university.

In January 2021, Chancellor Marks charged a team of faculty, staff, and students with collaborating on the development of a refreshed outlook for CU Denver, one that would capture a vision for 2030, strengthen and differentiate the university. The process was human-centered and inclusive by design and engaged hundreds of participants and generated thousands of ideas.

With the right vision, plan, execution, CU Denver can become a model university that truly meets the needs of all.

THE PROCESS

The strategic planning process used a unique method called design innovation (see page 5) that encourages big, bold idea generation, and the participation of the entire campus community. The process was divided into three phases:

Phase	Timing	Goal of Work	Format
PHASE 1 Our Vision for 2030	January 2021	Set the Vision	Broad community input was invited via multiple channels; 3,674+ ideas generated.
PHASE 2 Strengthen and Differentiate	February – April 2021	Develop the Themes	Eight multidisciplinary, cross-functional “Vision Teams” were charged to focus on themes informed by the 100 Days of Listening tour; they imagined, distilled, and recommended 4,000+ bold ideas.
PHASE 3 Synthesize & Deliver Our Strategic Plan	April – June 2021	Build the Strategy	Based on Vision Team reports and community input, a cogent and integrated strategic plan will be developed and released.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

PHASE 1: OUR VISION FOR 2030

Phase 1 consisted of foundational work around CU Denver's purpose, vision, values, and graduate characteristics. This began with gathering input from the CU Denver community through a series of community sessions and an online survey. The information-gathering process was rooted in appreciative inquiry – an inclusive, strengths-based approach to identify the most important attributes of our identity and ambitions — and served as a “north star” for the rest of our strategic planning work.

PHASE 2: STRENGTHEN AND DIFFERENTIATE CU DENVER — CURRENT PHASE

Phase 2 brought our community together to think big, dream, and strategize to determine how we can take CU Denver to the next level by 2030. This phase launched eight Vision Teams, organized around major themes informed by Chancellor Marks' 100 Days of Listening tour. These multidisciplinary, cross-functional teams were diverse and represented all corners of the university, bringing tremendous institutional knowledge to the table. They were charged with digging deep into our institution in order to develop goals, strategies, and initiatives to strengthen and differentiate CU Denver around their theme. A team of faculty, staff, and students from CU Denver's Comcast Media Technology Center/ InWorks, facilitated their work by co-creating a customized design innovation process with each of the Vision Teams.

The Phase 2 work represents the culmination of significant thought, discussion, data collection, and research that will inform the strategic plan for the future of CU Denver. The Vision Team reports are featured in this document.

PHASE 3: SYNTHESIZE AND DELIVER OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

In Phase 3, the Vision Teams' work is being reviewed, synthesized, and distilled into a bold, exciting, integrated, cohesive strategic plan for CU Denver in 2030. We will present working drafts of this strategic plan through a series of community feedback sessions in early- to mid-May 2021. Following these sessions, we will begin the process of writing the final report, which will be a top-line synthesis of the community's work focused on high-level goals and strategies. The report is expected to be delivered to the CU Board of Regents in June 2021 and shared with the community shortly thereafter. Operationalizing the plan will follow in Fall 2021.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

HOW WE DID IT: PHASE 2

Phase 2 Participation



2,000+
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



8
VISION TEAMS



130
VISION TEAM MEMBERS



4,000+
STORIES, IDEAS, AND
ASPIRATIONS GENERATED
BY VISION TEAMS

ABOUT DESIGN INNOVATION

[Design innovation](#) (DI) is a human-centered approach that blends the mindsets, methods, and languages of design thinking, systems thinking, engineering design, and business innovation to discover, define, develop, and deliver innovative solutions to complex problems. The process centers the concepts of creativity, openness, mindfulness, adaptability, empathy, and freedom to explore radical and impactful ideas about our future.

A team of faculty, staff, and students from CU Denver's Comcast Media Technology Center/InWorks, co-led by Professor Kristin Wood and Lauren Hebert, facilitated the VisionT Teams' work. At a high-level, the teams:

- Kicked off their work by broadly engaging our community to understand individual points of view related to their theme.
- Analyzed what they heard to identify the opportunities where CU Denver could make the greatest impact.
- Generated initial ideas about how we could best make that impact and tested those ideas again with our community.
- Incorporated the community's feedback and created bold, differentiating ideas to take CU Denver to the next level by 2030.

This process was built around four sessions that intentionally brought together all eight Vision Teams in order to facilitate cross-collaboration and inspire new and bold ideas at the intersection of the distinct teams.

