



COMMUNITY
COLLEGE OF
DENVER



DR. MARIELENA DESANCTIS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

October 2024

Advancing Equity in Higher Education: CCD President Joins Panel at Colorado HSI Consortium

On September 20, Community College of Denver President, Dr. Marielena DeSanctis, took part in a pivotal panel discussion at the Colorado Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Consortium event hosted on the Auraria Campus. The panel brought together leaders from Colorado's Hispanic-Serving Institutions to discuss the critical role of HSIs in advancing equity, access, and student success for Latinx students.

During the discussion, Dr. DeSanctis highlighted CCD's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and removing barriers for underrepresented students, sharing insights from the college's participation in the Moon Shot for Equity initiative. She emphasized that institutions like CCD play a vital role in bridging educational gaps by providing targeted support services, career-connected learning opportunities, and workforce responsive curriculum.

Dr. DeSanctis also stressed the importance of collaboration among Colorado's HSIs to create statewide pathways for success, not just for Latinx students, but for



all students from historically marginalized communities. Her remarks underscored CCD's leadership in addressing systemic inequities and its dedication to success beyond graduation.

The panel reflected a shared vision among leaders to elevate Colorado's higher education system as a national model for serving diverse student populations, particularly as HSIs continue to grow in importance across the state.

Transform the Student Experience

Strengthening Community and Opportunity: CCD's Hispanic-Serving Institution Committee in Action

For over two decades, Community College of Denver (CCD) has proudly held the designation of a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), a reflection of the rich diversity of our student body. With more than 39% of our students identifying as Hispanic or Latinx, this designation is not just a label—it's a commitment to creating a space where Hispanic students feel empowered, supported, and celebrated.

At the heart of this effort is CCD's HSI Committee, a passionate group of faculty, staff, and administrators who are dedicated to fostering an environment where all students can thrive. From advocating for scholarships to offering mentorship and celebrating Hispanic culture, the committee is working to create meaningful change in the lives of our students.

This fall, the HSI Committee has curated a series of events that not only celebrate Hispanic heritage but also provide our students with opportunities for personal and professional growth. These activities are designed to foster community, enhance career readiness, and celebrate the richness of Hispanic culture at CCD.

The lineup of activities includes:

- **SOMOS HSI Week Kick-off**
This event introduces students and staff to Hispanic heritage while building excitement for the upcoming activities.
- **Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration**
An evening of cultural celebration, featuring dinner, Loteria, crafts, music, and prizes.



es. This event is designed to bring together the CCD community for a fun celebration of Hispanic culture.

- **Heritage Homecoming: Celebrating Hispanic Alumni**
An engaging event with Hispanic/Latino alumni as they share their personal stories of success and growth. This will be a great opportunity for students to gain insight and advice on how to navigate college and beyond, fostering connections with role models from the CCD community.
- **Leadership Lab Panel Discussion**
Students will hear from prominent Hispanic leaders as they discuss their journeys, leadership strategies, and the influence of Hispanic culture on their careers. This event supports students looking to gain leadership insights and professional development tips.
- **Flash Mentoring**
This unique mentoring opportunity offers students one-on-one conversations with CCD faculty, staff, and alumni. It's a chance to get personalized advice and mentorship on career paths, professional development, and more.

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Transform the Student Experience

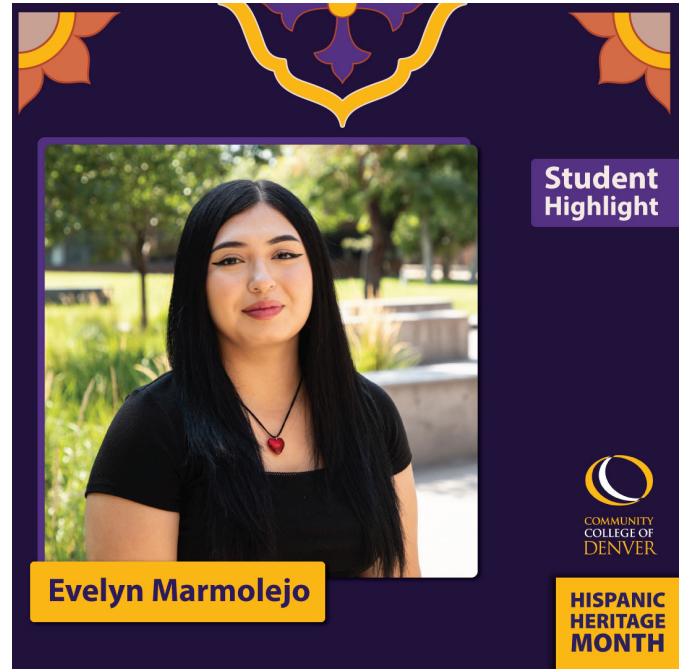
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- **Fiesta Fusion Networking Celebration**

A networking celebration where students can connect with community members, build their professional network, and celebrate Hispanic culture one last time.

Through these events, CCD's HSI Committee is committed to providing our students with a space where they can not only succeed academically but also connect with their heritage and community in meaningful ways.

Visit our website to learn more about HSI at CCD at <https://www.ccd.edu/hsi>



Transform the Student Experience

Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders: CCD's Civic Engagement in Action

Community College of Denver (CCD) continues to foster a culture of civic responsibility and engagement, recognizing the importance of equipping students with the knowledge and tools to actively participate in our democracy. This fall, CCD hosted several dynamic events centered around civic engagement, underscoring our dedication to not only educating students academically but also empowering them to be informed citizens and leaders in their communities.

Engaging in Democracy: Presidential Debate Watch Party

In early September, CCD students gathered for an engaging and lively Presidential Debate Watch Party, hosted on Auraria Campus. The event brought students together to witness the democratic process in action and fostered thought-provoking discussions about the candidates and their platforms. By providing a space for students to observe and debate, this event not only encouraged political awareness but also emphasized the importance of informed civic participation.

Celebrating National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day

As part of Hispanic Heritage Month, CCD partnered with local community organizations and county clerks to host a vibrant celebration of National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day on September 17. The event provided an opportunity for students to learn about the importance of voter registration and constitutional rights through roundtable discussions, arts and crafts, and delicious food. The interactive sessions with community leaders helped bring the importance of civic participation to life, making it a memorable and impact-



ful experience for all involved.

"Join or Die" Film Screening: A Call to Action

On September 17, CCD joined CU Denver School of Public Affairs and Auraria Votes for a screening of the powerful documentary *Join or Die*, which explores the crucial role of civic engagement in shaping the future of the United States. Following the film, students were inspired to "Meet Their Moment"—whether through community involvement, campus activities, or in the classroom. The event sparked thoughtful reflection and empowered students to take action, understanding that the future of our democracy depends on active participation.

Through these events, CCD continues to cultivate a campus culture where civic engagement is not only encouraged but celebrated. By providing opportunities for students to engage with the democratic process and fostering a deeper understanding of civic responsibility, CCD ensures that its students are prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities and beyond.

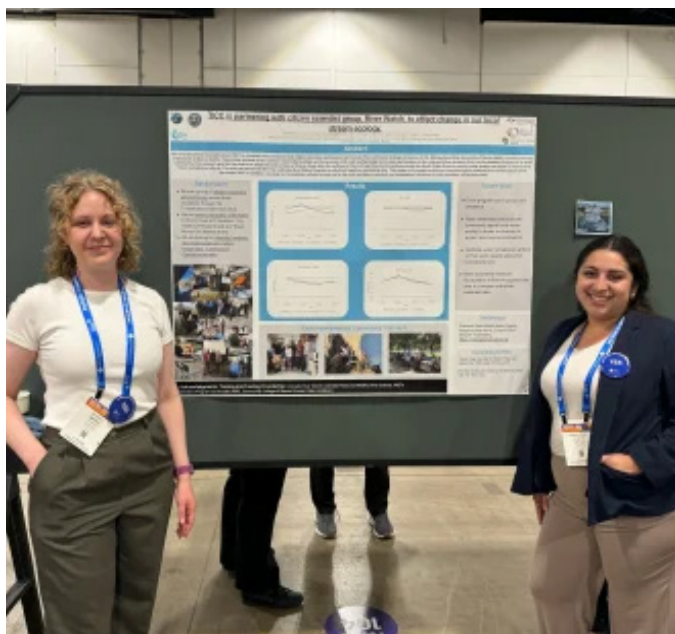
Visit our website to learn more at <https://www.ccd.edu/ccd-votes>

Transform the Student Experience

CCD Chemistry Students Make National Impact at American Chemical Society Conference

This year, a group of CCD's chemistry students achieved national recognition by presenting their research at the prestigious American Chemical Society (ACS) conference. Under the guidance of Chemistry Assistant Professor Tina Zhao and faculty member Joel Thompson, the students collaborated with Denver Water to monitor local streams and assess water quality, a project that highlights the importance of environmental stewardship.

The students' research, focused on identifying potential contaminants and evaluating the health of the local ecosystem, provided them with valuable hands-on experience in environmental chemistry. This unique partnership allowed the students to apply their classroom knowledge to real-world environmental challenges, making a tangible impact on the community.



The acceptance of their research into the ACS conference is a significant achievement, as the event attracts thousands of chemists from around the world. It stands as one of the most prominent platforms for scientific exchange. Their participation not only demonstrates the quality of their work but also underscores the value of academic and community partnerships in addressing critical environmental issues.

Through this accomplishment, CCD's chemistry program continues to foster meaningful research and create opportunities for students to engage in work that has lasting environmental and societal impact. The dedication of these students reflects the strength of our program and the power of collaboration in solving today's challenges.

Encouraging Student Involvement at CCD's "Find Your Flock" Event

CCD recently held its "Find Your Flock" event, a vibrant and engaging opportunity for students to explore ways to get involved on campus. Hosted by the Student Programming, Activities, & Resource Center (SPARC), the event featured a club fair and luncheon, inviting students to discover the many active student organizations and honor societies that are shaping campus life.

From academic clubs to social and cultural organizations, students were able to connect with like-minded peers and explore leadership opportunities. The event also provided a chance for students to learn about honor societies and how they can enrich their college experience by joining a community of scholars.

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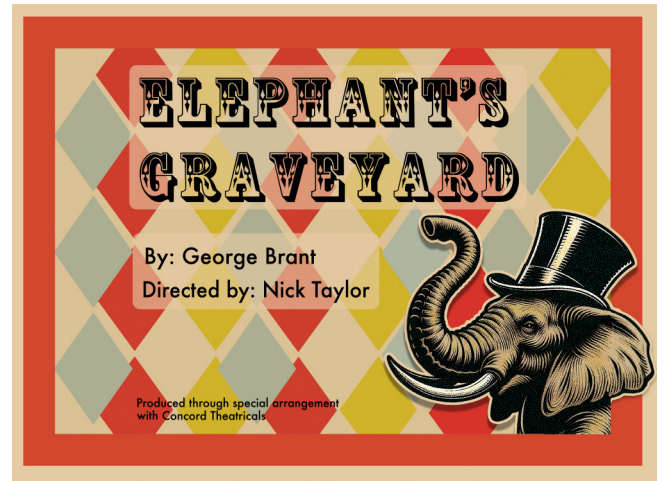
Transform the Student Experience

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To make the day even more memorable, attendees enjoyed a complimentary Chipotle lunch, fostering a welcoming environment for all. By connecting students with resources and pathways for involvement, "Find Your Flock" highlighted the many ways students can enrich their educational experience at CCD and cultivate lasting connections that support both their academic and personal growth.



CCD Theatre Brings Elephant's Graveyard to Life



Community College of Denver's Theatre Department recently captivated audiences with its production of *Elephant's Graveyard*, a gripping play by George Brant that delves into a tragic event from American history. Directed by Nick Taylor, Chair of Performing Arts, the play explores the dark intersection of a traveling circus and a small Tennessee town in 1916, leading to the shocking execution of an elephant.

Set against the backdrop of early 20th-century America, *Elephant's Graveyard* blends historical fact with legend to offer a powerful reflection on human nature and the societal forces that drive people to seek spectacle and vengeance. The production drew in audiences from across the Denver community, offering an emotional and thought-provoking theatrical experience.

Performed at CCD's Studio Theatre, the intimate setting allowed viewers to fully engage with the intense narrative.

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Transform the Student Experience

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The cast delivered raw, emotional performances that brought the complex characters and their motivations to life, leaving a lasting impression on those who attended. The powerful storytelling encouraged audiences to reflect on themes of justice, cruelty, and the consequences of unchecked public sentiment.

By taking on challenging and thought-provoking works like *Elephant's Graveyard*, CCD's Theatre Department continues to showcase its ability to present productions that resonate deeply with both students and the broader community, inviting meaningful conversations long after the curtain falls.



SGA Engagement Scholarship Fuels Innovation and Community at CCD

CCD's Student Government Association (SGA) has launched an initiative that's shaping the future of campus life. The SGA Engagement Scholarship offers financial support to CityHawks with ideas to enhance the student experience, sparking new programs, events, and activities that bring the community closer together.

Through this scholarship, individuals are turning creative concepts into tangible projects—whether it's through organizing impactful events, establishing student support networks, or creating spaces for connection and collaboration. The scholarship encourages innovation and resourcefulness, empowering recipients to bring fresh ideas to life in ways that make a lasting impression on campus.

By supporting these innovative efforts, CCD and the SGA are creating an environment where all CityHawks are not just participants, but active contributors to the college's growth. The Engagement Scholarship will become a powerful tool for driving meaningful change, showing how a single idea can ripple out to strengthen the entire community.



Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

Fostering Employee Well-Being through Mindfulness

With the fast pace of a new academic year underway, taking time for well-being has become more important than ever for CCD faculty and staff. In response, the Employee Relations team has launched a mindfulness initiative this September, encouraging employees to use simple practices to manage stress and stay focused.

Mindfulness can easily be woven into the workday, whether by setting daily intentions or taking short breaks to focus on breathing. These small, intentional actions help boost focus, improve engagement, and create a more productive environment. Being fully present during meetings also enhances communication and teamwork, both key to driving success across CCD.

To encourage participation, employees who took part in the mindfulness challenge were invited to stop by the HR office by September 30 to receive a punch on their health and wellness card—offering a tangible reminder of the value of taking moments for self-care.

This initiative is part of CCD's ongoing effort to create a supportive and balanced workplace, where employees can thrive both personally and professionally.



Supporting Employee Wellness: A Cornerstone of CCD's Vibrant Workforce

At CCD, employee well-being is woven into the fabric of our culture. This fall, CCD hosted its annual Health and Wellness Fair, giving faculty and staff the opportunity to explore ways to prioritize their health, reduce stress, and build healthier habits—all in a supportive and engaging environment.

From yoga sessions to art therapy and chair

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Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

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massages, the Wellness Fair offered a range of activities designed to help employees recharge and find balance amidst the busy academic year. Attendees also had access to flu shots and health screenings, making it easy for them to stay on top of their physical health.

The event highlighted CCD's ongoing efforts to create a workplace where well-being is a priority, ensuring employees have access to the resources and tools they need to stay healthy—both mentally and physically. With opportunities to connect with wellness vendors, grab some fun swag, and learn new ways to manage stress, the fair provided a much-needed break for everyone who attended.

The Health and Wellness Fair is just one of the ways CCD continues to create a positive and healthy environment for its workforce, recognizing that when employees feel supported, everyone benefits.



Create Education Without Barriers Through Transformational Partners

CCD Alumni Reconnect at 'Back to the Nest' Social

On Wednesday, September 18th, nearly 40 CCD alumni, staff, and supporters gathered on the rooftop deck of Denver Housing Authority's Kaleidoscope Collaborative Center for the 'Back to the Nest' Alumni Social. Organized by the CCD Foundation and the CCD Alumni Association, the event celebrated the beginning of a new academic year and provided an opportunity for alumni to reconnect with one another, as well as engage with current faculty and staff.

President Marielena DeSanctis kicked off the evening by welcoming attendees and reinforcing the importance of maintaining strong



connections with the CCD community. Jim Chavez, Executive Director of the CCD Foundation, followed with a look at how alumni can stay involved with CCD through mentoring current students, participating in programs, and contributing throughout the year.

A highlight of the evening was the announcement of the new Swoop Mascot Scholarship, funded by alumni contributions. This scholarship is one of the many ways CCD is continuing to invest in student leadership and engagement on campus.

The 'Back to the Nest' social is part of a larger initiative launched over the past 18



months to actively reconnect with alumni. From increasing communication to hosting alumni-centered social events and offering opportunities to volunteer as mentors or scholarship reviewers, CCD is building a strong and lasting relationship with its alumni network. Partnerships, such as the one with Handshake, also provide alumni with valuable career resources and connections.

As CCD continues these efforts, alumni play a key role in supporting the next generation of students, building a vibrant and engaged community that extends beyond graduation.

Redefine Our Value Proposition

Auraria Campus: A \$2.7 Billion Engine of Economic Growth

The recently published Auraria Economic Impact Report highlights the substantial contributions of the Auraria Campus to Colorado's economy, with a combined economic impact of \$2.7 billion and the support of 19,723 jobs statewide in 2023. The findings were made public in a press release from the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC), underscoring the collaborative power of CCD, MSU Denver, and CU Denver.

Conducted by Parker Strategy Group, the report illustrates how the Auraria Campus serves not only as a hub of education but as a significant driver of economic growth across the state. CCD's Institutional Research and Finance teams were instrumental in contributing data for this report, providing critical insights gathered early last Spring to offer a comprehensive view of the college's economic role.

"The impact we make as part of the Auraria Campus community is clear," said Dr. Marielena DeSanctis, President of CCD. "We're not just preparing students for the workforce, we're actively shaping Colorado's economy through our agile and innovative programming to substantively close the talent gap for employers and maximize future earnings for our graduates."

The report underscores the importance of CCD's career-driven programs, which equip students with in-demand skills in fields such as healthcare, technology, and business. These programs have helped position CCD as a vital resource for both students and employers, contributing to the economic



stability of the region.

The shared-service model that underpins the Auraria Campus allows for operational efficiencies, reducing costs while enhancing collective outcomes for the three institutions. This unique approach magnifies the impact of each individual college, delivering tangible benefits to the state of Colorado.

With the press release now public, the results of this report offer a compelling narrative about the pivotal role that the Auraria Campus and its member institutions play in fostering long-term economic growth and community development across the state.

You can read the entire report at <https://www.ahec.edu/auraria/2023-economic-impact-report>