



# President's Report

## Dr. Mordecai Brownlee

January 2025 | Issue 9

*The Community College of Aurora (CCA) provides high-quality instruction and student support services to Aurora and Denver, Colorado. With a vision to aspire to be a college where every student succeeds, CCA is the most diverse college in the State of Colorado. Focused on creating social and economic mobility for its students, the college offers courses on two (2) campuses, online, and through its high school concurrent enrollment programs. For more information, visit [www.ccaurora.edu](http://www.ccaurora.edu).*

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### Transform the student experience

For Fall 2024, CCA will grant an additional 190 degrees and certificates through a retroactive graduation process. This initiative identifies students who met all the requirements for their credentials but did not apply for graduation. By utilizing the same data and methods as our proactive graduation process, we can extend invitations to these students for recognition at the May Commencement Ceremony.

The reimplementation of the DFNP (Drop for Non-Payment) at CCA has yielded significant positive results for both enrollment and financial health. For Fall 2024, the total amount for first warnings was 34% lower than the principal balance sent to external collections for Spring. This early intervention also helped fill seats in CCA courses, increasing enrollment in full-term courses from 18 to 20 students per section. Additionally, CCA has repurposed underutilized spaces into a flex workspace and a visitor center for prospective students. The recent upgrade to the AI chatbot, featuring a ChatGPT interface, has streamlined student interactions, enhancing the overall experience.

CCA has earned the prestigious 2024 ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses Award for College Student Voting, recognizing our outstanding efforts in increasing nonpartisan voter participation among students. Additionally, the college received the 2024 Highly Established Action Plan Seal for its strong initiatives to promote civic engagement, political participation, and student voter turnout. More details can be found [HERE](#).

In December, the Division of Student Success hosted the 2nd Annual Foxy's Holiday Shop, welcoming 50 students from the Parenting Student, COSI CPP, and COSI FWYS cohorts, alongside over 100 family members. The event allowed students to select gifts, personal care items, household goods, toys, and more. In addition to shopping, families enjoyed cookie decorating, games, music, and hot chocolate. This year, Student Government Association (SGA) members contributed by donating winter coats, gloves, hats, socks, and ice scrapers for all the participating students and their families. Based on its success, SGA has committed to making this partnership a permanent feature for future events.



On December 4, the Visual and Performing Arts department hosted an interdisciplinary art showcase, featuring student works from art, music, and theatre disciplines. The event included a gallery exhibition followed by live performances, showcasing a wide range of artistic mediums, including digital art, sculpture, vocal and piano performances, and theatrical presentations. The showcase provided an invaluable opportunity for students to display their work publicly and gain experience in a live setting. We appreciate Julie Rada, Chair of the Visual and Performing Arts Department, and her team for organizing this impactful event.





In November 2024, CCA sent eight TRIO Upward Bound students to the 2024 STEAM Symposium in Orlando, Florida. This event, exclusively for TRIO Upward Bound students, was a collaborative effort with Xfinity and included a range of activities designed to engage students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). Highlights of the symposium included a visit to the Kennedy Space Center, where students explored the center and participated in a simulated Apollo 8 mission. The event also featured panel discussions with STEAM professionals and exclusive behind-the-scenes insights from Universal Studios' upcoming theme park, Epic Universe. Thanks to Adrienne Shabandarian and the TRIO team for their dedication to providing this invaluable experience for our students.



In the coming weeks, the Division of DEI will offer several opportunities for support that includes processing space, "Know Your Rights" workshops for our Immigrant, DACA, Undocumented, Asylee, Refugee, and International communities, and we are working to organize Community Building Circles for our LGBTQIA2S+ members. Beginning next week, the CCA Cultural Center and our new Program Coordinator of DEI, Alejandra Ruano, will host **Post Inauguration Processing Space** for impacted students. And on January 30, 2025 we will host a *Community Connect: Information & Resources for Immigrant Communities* on Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm in the Rotunda. The purpose of this session is to provide information and resources to our Immigrant communities, hear from a guest speaker who serves as an Immigration Attorney, provide resources, and conduct a Q&A session.

## Transform our own work experience

The Community College of Aurora (CCA) is honored to announce its official recognition as a Certified Age Friendly Employer (CAFE) by the Age Friendly Institute (AFI), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the inclusion of older adults in the workforce. This recognition highlights CCA's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace, which includes the hiring and retention of older adults. CCA is the first higher education institution in Colorado to achieve this distinction, reflecting both our current practices and our continuous efforts to identify opportunities for improvement, ensuring a welcoming environment where all individuals, regardless of identity, feel valued and supported. For more details, please read the press release [HERE](#).

Additionally, Human Resources (HR) is working with Financial Aid to finalize a work-study hiring and onboarding process flowchart, which will be distributed to hiring managers in the near future. We are also pleased to report that CCA HR is fully staffed for the first time since May 2024. Our focus is now on training our new team members and preparing staffing and budget plans for FY2026.

The DEI Division is excited to welcome two new employees to the team. Alejandra Ruano began work at CCA on January 10<sup>th</sup> to serve as the Program Coordinator of DEI & Equitable Student Success in the Cultural Center. The purpose of Alejandra's role is to provide DEI Related student programming, training and events to students of diverse identifies, beliefs, and practices. We also welcome Lorely Sanchez as the new TRIO SSS and ESL Program Coordinator. Lorely will meet with Trio Students and provide them with the support they need to persist, complete and transfer to a four-year institution. Currently we are in an active search to find an inaugural Executive Director of Equitable Student Success. The Search committee is currently reviewing applications with plans to have someone hired in this role to begin work in March.

## Create education without barriers through transformational partnerships

The CCA Foundation is excited to announce that David and Barbara Weaver have generously committed an additional \$500,000 to support the development of the Center for Applied Science and Technology (CAST). With this contribution, the Foundation has now secured \$17.1 million toward its \$18 million fundraising goal for the new Center, which is slated to open in Fall 2025.

On December 10, Colorado Gives Day, the CCA Foundation surpassed its fundraising goal, raising \$73,569—well beyond the \$60,000 target. This achievement, totaling 122% of the goal, will directly benefit students through scholarships, emergency funds, and increased support for graduation, transfer, and continued education. For more information, please refer to the press release [HERE](#).

Additionally, CCA is grateful to 4Rivers Equipment, a prominent construction equipment supplier based in Commerce City, for their generous \$35,000 gift to support CAST's development. As Colorado's largest John Deere equipment dealer, 4Rivers Equipment is also partnering with CCA on its innovative Diesel Power Mechanics program, providing essential resources to ensure students are well-prepared for careers in the industry. Read more [HERE](#).

The CCA Foundation is also pleased to announce a \$20,000 grant from the Xcel Foundation to support CCA's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives. This award, which represents a \$5,000 increase from previous years, underscores Xcel Foundation's ongoing commitment

to advancing STEM education and fostering strong community partnerships. The press release can be found [HERE](#).

On Monday, January 27, 2025, from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, CCA's annual MLK "The Spirit of King" Luncheon will take place in the Rotunda on the CentreTech campus. This event is in collaboration with the City of Aurora Office of People, Culture and Belonging and the Aurora Police Department. This year's theme, *Together We Rise: A Celebration of Inclusion and Unity*, will feature guest speaker Pastor Charles Gilford and the presentation of the Community Champion Awards to local heroes and APD officers. CCA will also honor faculty, staff, and students who exemplify the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., with student awardees receiving scholarships from the CCA Foundation and the City of Aurora.

### Redefine our value proposition through accessibility, affordability, quality, accountability, resource development, and operational excellence

The development of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan is progressing at the Community College of Aurora. In November, the college completed 14 focus groups, engaging over 200 participants, and identified 263 distinct themes, which were then consolidated into 10 key meta-themes. To ensure broad community engagement, these themes were shared during 4 President Listening Sessions and through an online survey, collectively drawing over 120 participants. Attendees participated in a gallery walk, reviewing and selecting the top 5 themes they deemed most critical for the college's future. Building on this input, the logistics team has developed objectives aligned with these themes and is now focused on establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Efforts are also underway to identify Key Performance Measurements (KPMs) to track progress. Looking ahead, the college is preparing for the 2025 Spring Strategic Summit, where the community will collaborate to define specific goals for the Strategic Plan's objectives. The team has set a work cadence to guide the remaining phases, with the goal of finalizing the plan by June. The 2025-2030 Strategic Plan will be unveiled at the 2025 Fall Strategic Summit, where a cycle of regular reporting will be launched to ensure ongoing alignment with strategic goals.

The Community College of Aurora (CCA) has submitted an application to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for a Substantive Change to offer its first-ever Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Behavioral Health. As this will be CCA's inaugural bachelor's degree, HLC required a Peer Review Visit, which took place on January 13-14, 2025. The review team met with over 32 individuals, including students, faculty, staff, and advisory board members. While the HLC Peer Review Team did not provide specific findings during the visit, their feedback was overall complimentary and positive, with an indication that the report will reflect this. The college anticipates receiving the official results of the visit in March, following a comprehensive review by the Institutional Accreditation Committee (IAC).

The selection of a general contractor for the remodeling of Centennial's Health & Sciences building has been completed, marking a significant step forward in the project. In an effort to address financial challenges, CCA has implemented a weekly drop policy for non-payment for the spring semester. This policy encourages students to either set up payment plans or pay their tuition in full, with the goal of reducing the number of unpaid balances that are sent to collections at the end of the semester.

The transition to a new bookstore vendor is underway, with transition meetings set to begin on Monday, January 20th. The new vendor is expected to be fully operational by April 1st. Additionally, CCA has been without a Director of Facilities for the past five months. After several unsuccessful

recruitment efforts, the college engaged a professional recruiter in November, resulting in four candidates being considered. Three candidates were interviewed, and background and reference checks are currently being conducted on one of them. If these checks are favorable, an offer will be extended, with a projected start date of mid-February.