



From: **Constancio Nakuma, Provost and EVC**

Subject Line: **Evolving our Funding Approach to Graduate Education**

To: Deans/Assoc Deans, Grad Program Directors, Shared Governance Leaders, Cabinet, Provost's Team

Dear colleagues,

A few weeks ago, I sent [this memo](#) to announce that we would restore direct funding to PhD programs for 2025-26, in amounts historically provided. That memo also announced a pause on our graduate education scholarships program, pending funding availability and allocation considerations.

Today, I write with updates to outline the road ahead for centrally administered graduate education funding.

- We will be investing an additional \$500,000 in one-time funds annually for the next three years to improve funding for graduate education.
- Most of these dollars will be allocated toward direct student support across CU Denver's doctoral programs. As we describe below, our model for allocating doctoral funds will evolve toward achieving self-sustainability.
- With this new allocation, we will again be able to annually offer a modest number of master's scholarships as well, which some programs leverage to enhance their doctoral enrollments. This investment will partially mitigate the loss of one-time (and expired) scholarship funds from the CU System. Our scholarship distribution program will restart in the coming months, pending dialogue about ideal amounts and allocation processes.

Moving forward, we must allocate central funds for graduate education more strategically and with consideration of the needs of all programs. We aim to leverage these limited, one-time funds in a manner that incentivizes mission-aligned revenue generation and institutional savings going forward, thereby creating a more sustainable long-term path for graduate student support.

Our top near-term priority will be to devise a funding allocation model for doctoral students—who can ultimately have positive financial impact on the university through involvement in externally funded projects and their classroom and research efforts—based on these four principles:

- **Certainty:** We recognize that doctoral programs need advanced assurance of funding they can commit to students during recruitment. This is why we restored the PhD funding for 2025-26. We aim to notify programs of AY 2026-27 funding amounts by Fall 2025.

- **Accountability:** Starting in AY 2025-26, funding for doctoral programs will be attached to accountability expectations: a (smaller) base funding level, augmented by incentive amounts based on factors that reflect value provided to the university. We also will focus on bolstering university policies to provide clear guidance and ensure compliance with federal and state regulations.
- **Sustainability:** The three-year investment in graduate education will end in June 2028. By then, we need to replace this funding stream through increased revenue and cost savings to help us better recruit high-caliber students going forward.
- **Flexibility:** Because different programs have varied success measures and year-to-year needs, our model will combine quantitative, apples-to-apples metrics with other measures that account for program differences, market need, and other indicators of positive ROI for CU Denver.

Guided by these principles, a select group of administrators (including the AVC for graduate education), program directors, and faculty will be convened to advise me on determining an optimal allocation for the additional central graduate funding for AY 2025-26. Then, we will build a “base+incentive” allocation program with consultation from groups such as the Graduate Council and relevant program directors to ensure that diverse perspectives inform the final distribution formula. Our goal for codifying this structure for doctoral funding is late February 2025. Then, we will communicate the plan to stakeholders so they can begin planning for AY 2026-27.

I will provide further updates as necessary. Please reach out to me with questions, and thank you for all you do for CU Denver.



Constancio Nakuma, PhD

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs