

Sept. 21, 2023



University of Colorado **Denver**

Dear faculty and staff,

With the fall semester fully underway, we want to provide an update about our current enrollment picture and highlight some measures we are taking to help retain current students and recruit new ones. We also want to outline some implications that our enrollment results will have on Phase 2 of our strategic enrollment and budget initiative. **We believe budget reductions will be less than we anticipated last academic year** because of prudent financial planning, the hard work of the community in last year's budget process, and a better-than-anticipated state funding increase of 12% (more information appears later in this memo). Finally, we want to provide the latest information on compensation, including merit and other increases.

As outlined in Chancellor Marks' [welcome back memo](#), student success and strategic enrollment are key transformational priorities for CU Denver and are vital to fulfilling our mission, increasing access to a Lynx education, and bolstering our overall financial strength.

**Budget reductions for
Phase 2 are expected
to be less than we
anticipated last year.**

In this memo, the Chancellor discussed our campus philosophy that enrollment is everyone's responsibility—which means that we are all in this together—and she also indicated that enrollment was trending downward for the fall semester. In early September, the process known as census was completed, which means we now have an accurate picture of our student enrollment totals, which we are sharing here.

Fall Enrollment Picture

CU Denver has seen an overall decrease in fall enrollment by 3.7%, which equates to about 500 fewer students and \$3.1 million fewer dollars than budgeted. For the fall term, we saw decreases in out-of-state first-time students, transfer students, and international graduate students. As a tuition-dependent institution—where nearly three-quarters of our budget comes from tuition and fees and only 23% of our unrestricted budget coming from the State of Colorado—our post-census enrollment numbers are a critical component in finalizing CU Denver's budgetary standing and outlook.

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On a positive note, year-over-year retention remained strong and consistent with this time last year, which is a testament to the hard work and expertise of our faculty and staff to educate, support, and keep our students engaged and at CU Denver.

In addition, we continue to make good progress on our campuswide digital strategy, including the completion of a classroom technology audit; the launch of the Teaching Innovation and Program Strategy (TIPS) Division; the development of a [microcredentials](#) and [badging initiative](#); and the creation and offering of centralized market intelligence services. From an online enrollment perspective, we are also making headway. While the number of online student credit hours have declined slightly at CU Denver since the first year of the pandemic, the 2022–23 total was still 58% greater than 2019–20 and represents 38% of all credit hours, the highest percentage ever.

Enrollment Efforts in the Year Ahead

While enrollment dips are certainly not ideal, we need to move into actionable solutions for the benefit of our students and our campus. In close partnership with faculty and staff, we will be progressing from planning to implementation in a few key areas designed for both short- and long-term growth.

1. **Set and Track Enrollment Targets:** We, along with Dr. Monique L. Snowden, senior vice chancellor for strategic enrollment and student success, and the Provost's team, are working with schools and colleges to set, review, and track enrollment targets for each academic program. This practice will enable us to know where we are and where we need to be with respect to recruitment and enrollment and how we activate our programmatic marketing.
2. **Strengthen Financial and Student Aid:** We recognize that this is an area of opportunity to assist with both the recruitment and retention of our students, and we are committed to doing more.
3. **Become Colorado's No. 1 Transfer University:** We are deepening partnerships and pathway programs that support transfer students, ultimately positioning CU Denver as Colorado's preferred transfer university. We are also focused on a number of efforts to advance and accelerate degree completion.
4. **Create and Implement Operational Excellence:** In close partnership with all schools, colleges, and central support units, we will work toward standardizing our advising and other practices to enhance student experience and outcomes.

Everyone has a hand in attracting students to CU Denver through our outreach and the strength of our academic offerings, or ensuring they persist to completion through the quality of our student experience and support we provide. As we set our sights on improving enrollment and bolstering retention for the Spring 2024 semester and beyond, we look forward to working with the Lynx community to build upon the foundation of care that already

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exists on our campus. We also look to promote a more intentional culture of enrollment and retention ownership that helps each of us to understand how our work shapes enrollment and student outcomes.

Merit Increases

Fair and competitive compensation remains a key priority for us, and we've begun to make progress in this area. Last spring, we discussed with our community our aspiration to offer a 3% merit increase pool for all faculty and non-classified staff as well as a 2% pool that could be used for retention and equity adjustments. The 3% merit pool, approved by the Board of Regents, will remain and will go into effect in January 2024. For the equity and retention portion of the plan, we are committed to two actions: 1. Providing one-time dollars this fiscal year to make some immediate investments in this area; and 2. Developing a longer-term and more holistic compensation approach through our [Comprehensive Compensation Collaborative](#) (3C) initiative, which aims to identify areas of compression, equity issues, and market fluctuations.

Phase 2 Strategic Enrollment and Budget Initiative

While budget analyses required to inform this process is still ongoing following census, **we want to reassure you that proposed budget reductions will likely be less than the 4% assumption that we had made last year.** And please know that administration remains in this together with schools and colleges, as we were last year. Concurrently, we plan to announce a plan to make some one-time investments to help support program growth across the schools and colleges. So, we have a dual focus for this coming year—to identify and implement expense reductions while also making strategic one-time investments and process changes to turn around our enrollment trajectory and support student retention and success.

Similar to last year, discussions on process and implementation will naturally include shared governance leaders, and the [principles underlying the process](#) that we rolled out and implemented last year will remain intact.

We will officially roll out Phase 2 by early October, so please look for more information in the weeks ahead.

In Closing

We want to thank you for your innovative ideas, passion, and tireless efforts to support all of our learners. Together, we can strengthen our retention and enrollment pipeline, create solutions that maximize our students' success, and solidify our financial future.

Please look for invitations to upcoming information sessions to learn more.

Best regards,

Constancio Nakuma
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

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Ann Sherman
Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration