



MSUSM
DENVER

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2024

“Unidos” mural
designed by Mexican
artist Spaik on the east
side of the Auraria
Event Center Building



Contents

Land and Labor Acknowledgment	2
Important Terms	3
President’s Message	4
Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion’s Message	5
Diversity Strategic Plan	6
Leading the Way in Latinx Servingness	8
Eloté Recipe	9
Cultivating Community:	
The Impact of Employee Affinity Groups	10
A Decade Committed to Excellence in Diversity	12
Faculty Fellows Transforming MSU Denver	14
Advancing Justice and Cultivating Solidarity	16
Energizing MSU Denver with Dance and Social Justice	17
Celebration of Legacy and Activism at MSU Denver	18
Office of Diversity and Inclusion	19
Demographic Profile	20
Equity Events 2024-25	22

Land and Labor Acknowledgment



We honor and acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Nations. We acknowledge the land and history of this space we are fortunate to gather in today. This area was also the site of trade, hunting, gathering, and healing for many other Native Nations: the Lakota, Ute, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Shoshone, and others. Forty-eight tribes have called this land home. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the land, water, plants, and animals who called this place home.

Let us also acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We recognize that U.S. public policy has been used to displace Indigenous communities, erode Tribal Nation sovereignty, and forcibly assimilate Native individuals into U.S. society. We respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather. We pay our respect to them and give thanks to all Tribal Nations and the ancestors of this place.

We also acknowledge the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who worked this stolen land for the colonists, and who continue to disproportionately face economic oppression, racism, violence and exploitation.

Lastly, we want to recognize the community and families of Auraria displaced by the creation of this campus for Metropolitan State University of Denver to have a place that we now call a learning community. We share this acknowledgment to encourage all of us here on the Auraria Campus to consider how our work in this space and in our daily lives can address these historic and contemporary atrocities perpetuated against Native people and other marginalized communities.

Important Terms

Equity

Historically and politically, equity refers to the process of creating equivalent outcomes for members of historically underrepresented and oppressed groups. Equity is about ending systemic discrimination against people based on their identity and background, and it focuses on building areas where gaps exist on institutional needs to achieve diversity and inclusion.

Inclusion

Inclusion exists when traditionally marginalized individuals and groups feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to participate in majority culture as full and valued members of the community, shaping and redefining that culture in different ways.

Diversity

Conceptualizing diversity through an equity and inclusion understanding provides focus on the social representations and institutional processes that cause groups or individuals to be systematically excluded from full participation in higher education.

It also relates to the understanding that benefits for some groups are embedded in the organizational aspects of the University.

This includes not only social identities and characteristics but processes such as design of curriculum, admissions policies and practices, hiring practices, budgeting, tenure decisions and any other day-to-day business decisions made within the institution.

HSI Servingness

Using the Multidimensional Framework of Servingness at HSIs by Garcia, Núñez and Sansone (2019), MSU Denver defines servingness as being conceptualized by indicators of serving as well as structures for serving. Indicators of serving include academic and non-academic outcomes that may be measured by HSIs, including but not limited to persistence, graduation, course completion, leadership identity, critical consciousness and civic engagement (Garcia et al., 2019). Students' overlapping experiences tied to each of these outcomes contribute to their overall sense of belonging and support (Garcia et al., 2019). As a result, servingness at an HSI is partially identified through actively fostering a culturally affirming environment for students through the creation and implementation of mentoring and support programs as well as cultural celebrations on campus.

Structures for serving then come into place as the additional definition of servingness. Structures for serving include organizational transformations to better serve Latina/o/x students.

Such transformations include HSI grant activities, decision-making processes, equity-minded leadership practices and policies, engagement with the community. etc. (Garcia et al., 2019). In practice, MSU Denver identifies servingness as an intentional transition of organizational structures through use of resources and programming. MSU Denver will learn with and from existing model HSIs to implement promising practices of servingness. Race and ethnicity must also be considered to fully identify the HSI mission for servingness. While it is inherent that there is no singular approach to serve the needs of students, servingness must therefore be multidimensional and race-conscious in application to serve diverse populations intentionally and adequately.

Message from the President



Metropolitan State University of Denver is a leader in social mobility that is committed to fostering equity. More than 55% of our undergraduate students identify themselves as people of color, and they find belonging, support, and a path to their dreams at MSU Denver. We connect our students — 96% from Colorado and 59.7% first-generation college students — directly to world-class faculty and high-quality job opportunities.

At MSU Denver, this work is about more than the numbers. Serving our students well, sharing diverse voices, and preparing all Coloradans for the modern workforce are critical. But don't just take our word for it. MSU Denver was honored with the Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy and Research Organization's Alianza Award for enhancing the well-being of the Latinx community; Denver Business Journal's 2024 Leaders in Diversity Award; and for the 10th year running, the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award by Insight into Diversity. The University has also proudly received

the Seal of Excelencia, a three-year certification recognizing its evidence-based commitment to serving Latino students — the first and only Colorado institution of higher education to receive the distinction.

Equity, diversity and inclusion are part of the University's values. MSU Denver established the state's first campus Immigrant Services Program in 1990. The University became a leading public advocate for undocumented students when we were one of the first in the nation to offer in-state tuition for this group of students in 2012, leading the state in passage of the ASSET bill.

From Accounting Services and the Writing Center to the classroom and the greater Colorado community, this work is everyone's responsibility. We invite you to take a look inside that work in this report.

Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

President

Metropolitan State University of Denver



Message from the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion



The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is excited to publish MSU Denver's 2024 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report. This report highlights a wide variety of efforts and initiatives from within the Office and across the University aimed at advancing the University's 2030 Strategic Plan and Diversity Strategic Plan.

At MSU Denver, equity, diversity and inclusion are integral threads woven into the institutional fabric. Part of the role of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion is to support and promote equity, diversity and inclusion as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and Minority Serving Institution (HSI/MSI). This includes supporting our faculty, staff and students and assuring that all faculty and staff members understand that we all play a role in, and contribute to, advancing this work. Anyone interested can play a significant role in leading and shaping an institutional culture of belonging and inclusivity. "Diversity" is not a word we throw around casually. Diversity is who MSU Denver is in all its richness dating to the University's foundation.

Equity, diversity and inclusion are core values of MSU Denver and serve as one of the five pillars of the University's 2030 Strategic Plan. These core values are also intentionally integrated into each of the four other pillars. At MSU Denver, we lean into our institutional mission, with access and cultivation at the forefront of our conversations. We understand well whom we serve and how we need to serve to assure inclusive excellence.

MSU Denver continues to demonstrate through our actions our commitment to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion. This includes our aim to become a national model Hispanic-Serving Institution; continued effort to integrate culturally responsive methods and processes into the institution's teaching and practice; and review of policies to assure that they are aligned with our mission to serve students first. The University is two years into the Diversity Strategic Plan, which outlines our goals and objectives and operationalizes Pillar IV of the 2030 Strategic Plan. The progress we have made, as you will read in this report, is obvious. From supporting faculty diversity success and offering

robust opportunities for staff and faculty development to aligning these efforts to student servingness and eventual student success, MSU Denver continues to elevate and further permeate our core values. **We believe everyone is deserving of support and the opportunity to grow and thrive.**

Through institutional avenues such as our Faculty Fellows initiative, Pathways to Possible, the Teaching Assistants program, HSI Week, Roadrunner First-Year Faculty Academy, department-led conferences, distinguished visiting professorships and many other efforts across the University highlighted in this report, MSU Denver continues to lead the way in innovative thinking and engagement toward positive impact and promising outcomes. Our signature programs bring renowned scholars and leaders from a variety of disciplinary and scholarly backgrounds, connecting to our Denver and campus communities by collaborating with school districts and community organizations. Our office takes pride in celebrating this incredible work by continuing to support and collaborate with the University's affinity groups, programs and conferences, cultural performances, graduation ceremonies and growth opportunities for our campus community.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion takes pride in our ongoing and demonstrated commitment to supporting, funding and elevating campus and community initiatives through sponsorships, grants and cross-functional collaboration to advance equity, diversity and inclusion. It is through these actions and the initiatives detailed in this report that we demonstrate student servingness and our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. At MSU Denver, we don't just talk the talk; we model what we expect from our campus community through transparency and accountability to our mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Benitez Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Benitez Jr., Ph.D.,
Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Diversity Strategic Plan



Metropolitan State University of Denver's Diversity Strategic Plan serves as a road map to continue to address, strengthen and advance equity, diversity and inclusion within the campus community. The Diversity Strategic Plan was crafted by the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council, a University-wide group established in spring 2020, comprising close to 80 staff, faculty members, students, alumni and community leaders.

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council is charged with examining equity, diversity and inclusion issues at MSU Denver cross-functionally, with respect to policy and practice from multiple perspectives. The council works collaboratively with MSU Denver campus constituents, broader community members and additional stakeholders, as appropriate, to engage in strategic and action-oriented conversations.

This summary provides an overview of the efforts that the council and its subcommittees have undertaken. The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council is committed to embodying diversity and mending internal and external inequities through community mending and engagement. The council prioritizes diversifying the faculty, staff and student body, using data-driven strategies for recruitment, retention and success. The council values professional development and campus climate cultivation and leans on our anchor mission and modified-open-access institutional identity, cultivating partnerships and relationships with surrounding communities that the University serves.

Part of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council's charge includes the development and implementation of the institution's Diversity Strategic Plan. That means reviewing existing efforts aimed at enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion in representation and practice; developing goals and objectives under the auspices of the University's 2030 Strategic Plan Pillar IV; and working closely with Strategy and Business Intelligence to develop a set of metrics to measure and assure accountability and transparency.

During spring 2020, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council established a steering committee and created four subcommittees each charged with examining different parts of the University within the context of equity, diversity

and inclusion. That included access, recruitment and retention; community-mending and outreach; HSI servingness; and institutional culture and climate.

The Campus Climate Cultivation Committee strives for an inclusive institutional culture aligned with the University's mission, promoting positive change by aligning institutional goals with equity, diversity and inclusion, addressing policy gaps and using data for evidence-based practices. This committee is also charged with the implementation of our campus-climate survey.

The HSI Servingness Committee examines HSI servingness practices to help improve and strengthen grant processes; implement and benchmark effective, promising strategies; involve and inform stakeholders; advocate for funding and initiatives; and stay knowledgeable about HSI-related matters.

The Recruitment, Retention and Success Committee reviews student, staff and faculty data and aims to see how we can continue to strengthen efforts focused on assuring employee and student access through an equity lens.

The Community Mending Committee focuses on mending and engagement with a focus on addressing harm caused by the University and society while building partnerships and relationships with specific communities.

The collaborative work of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council has led to the development of goals, strategies and actionable steps. Challenges include navigating legislation and ensuring scope boundaries. Continued collaboration, data-driven decisions and a focus on equity and inclusion are vital for implementing and achieving the plan's goals. MSU Denver aims to become a national model for diversity and inclusion in higher education.

Between 2020 and spring 2022, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council hosted numerous campus student, faculty and staff forums for campus members to offer voice and input in the process; met with all division and academic-branch leadership teams; and engaged deeply with institutional and campus-climate survey data. The Diversity Strategic Plan was presented to the Board of Trustees in March 2022, and the plan was endorsed and formalized.

*Andrew Salter,
Gina and Frank Day Health Institute
Gift Announcement Reception*

Diversity Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

1

Inclusivity and Campus Climate Cultivation

We intentionally foster and sustain a welcoming and diverse University community that strives for structural diversity and belongingness and cultivates, nurtures and sustains a culture of inclusive teaching, learning and practice, based on the principles of equity, inclusion, access and anti-racism.

Objectives

- Collaborate with administrative and academic units to ensure that equity, diversity, inclusion and access practices are integrated into the unit's goals and align with University priorities.
- Acknowledge and address equity and accountability gaps in policy and practice.
- Actively engage in the ongoing assessment of campus climate and culture to identify and address areas for improvement and disseminate and communicate findings with the campus community.
- Analyze data-driven and evidence-based recommendations to develop and implement appropriate actions with campus stakeholders.

2

Community Connections and Engagement

We deliberately develop new relationships, strengthen existing relationships and heal broken relationships. We build mutually beneficial collaborations that promote just transformation and further the educational and civic aims of the University and broader communities.

Objectives

- Engage in reflection to uncover and actively reconcile past and present injustices perpetuated by structural racism and systemic inequities impacting marginalized communities.
- Identify and evaluate the inequities and barriers within our social and operational structures by engaging with metro Denver and broader communities.
- Invest resources in and create a sustainable infrastructure for the implementation of strategies to mend past/current harm and create a positive impact, such as community wealth-building, investing in and supporting local communities and recognizing and responding to local issues and inequities.
- Identify areas for ongoing cultivation and strengthening of community relations and mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations.
- Ensure that aspects of marketing and communication, such as web presence to external relations, create a more inclusive, accessible and welcoming digital environment for MSU Denver and broader communities.

3

HSI Servingness

As a recently designated Hispanic-Serving Institution, we strive to become a national-model HSI, serving as a preferred choice for students and meeting the needs of a growing Latina/o/x student population in Colorado. We provide the resources necessary to develop academic and support services to address issues of access, persistence and success.

Objectives

- Inform policymakers and other stakeholders about HSI issues and advocate for enhanced funding and new initiatives, programs and services.
- Maintain expertise about laws, regulations, policies, issues and trends pertaining to HSI funding, programs and designation.
- Strengthen the process and criteria for the identification, review and prioritization of HSI/MSI grants and provide support for the implementation of grants awarded.
- Research and benchmark promising practices at HSI/MSI institutions for consideration.

4

Recruitment, Retention and Success

Diversify our faculty, staff and student body to better reflect the diverse communities we serve and commit to retaining and sustaining diversity among our students, faculty and staff. MSU Denver commits to the recruitment and retention of a diverse and inclusive workforce. We greatly value the diverse and intersectional identities of our faculty, staff and students. We recognize that to achieve equity, diversity must include but also go beyond representation.

Objectives

- Develop comprehensive recruitment and retention strategies to diversify MSU Denver's faculty and staff.
- Utilize data tracking with respect to diversity and understand data across employee categories, especially including administrative, classified and professional staff and faculty at all ranks.
- Provide institutional resources and support for the retention and success of diverse faculty and staff members.
- Provide opportunities for professional development and growth to faculty, staff members and students centered on Access, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Ensure recruitment and retention of students through collaboration with campus partners, sharing of strategies, vetting ideas and building of resources.
- Provide the resources necessary to develop academic and support services to address issues of access, persistence and success among students of color.

Leading the Way in Latinx Servingness



32nd Annual Bridge Speaker,
Dr. Lorgia García-Peña

MSU Denver has always been committed to educational opportunity and inclusion.

In fall 2023, the University was honored for its commitment to serving Latinx students by earning the prestigious Seal of Excelencia. The seal is a national certification awarded to colleges and universities that demonstrate a robust and intentional approach to supporting Latinx student success.

This achievement is not just a badge of honor but is a testament to MSU Denver's dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. The recognition was earned by MSU Denver through a rigorous application process highlighting the University's strategies and programs for fostering success for all students, with a focus on our Latinx population.

Earning the *Seal of Excelencia* is a significant milestone for MSU Denver; we are the first university in the state to earn the seal. It places MSU Denver among the top HSIs in the nation, setting a benchmark for other institutions to follow.

One of the foundational pillars of MSU Denver's strategy is ensuring access to higher education. The University has implemented several innovative programs to enhance enrollment rates despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, the Pathways to Possible program creates deep partnerships with local high schools, providing wrap-around support that includes career readiness and financial assistance. In fall 2022, MSU Denver admitted 4,986 Latinx students, the highest number to date, reflecting a 29.8% increase from fall 2018.

Another key initiative is the Concurrent Enrollment program, which allows high school students to take college courses at no tuition cost to students or families, thus building their confidence and giving a head start to their college careers. The Displaced Aurarian Scholarship, covering tuition and fees for families and descendants displaced from

the Auraria neighborhood to build the MSU Denver campus.

Retention of Latinx students is another critical area where MSU Denver has made significant strides. The University's Immigrant Services Program provides academic and social support to undocumented, DACA, immigrant and refugee students. The impact is evident: the retention rate from fall to spring for ISP participants was 89% in the 2021-2022 academic year, with an 85.7% retention rate for Latinx students from fall 2021 to fall 2022.

The Classroom to Career Hub (C2Hub) integrates career planning and professional development into students' academic experiences. Serving over 57% students of color, the C2Hub helps students develop career readiness skills, thereby enhancing their academic and professional trajectories. Similarly, the Teaching Assistants Program has shown that leveraging student mentors increases retention rates of students of color. From fall 2020 to spring 2022, 45.6% of teaching assistants were students of color, reflecting MSU Denver's commitment to peer support and mentorship.

Financial support is crucial for student success, and MSU Denver has excelled in providing targeted financial assistance to Latinx students. The Earn and Learn program, for example, offers supplemental funding for students participating in unpaid internships, with over 60% of participants reporting first-generation status. This initiative saw a remarkable 127% increase in the number of interns from spring 2018 to spring 2019.

Emergency funds are also a critical component of MSU Denver's support system. The Student Emergency Retention Fund and the Dreamer Emergency Fund provide vital financial assistance to students facing unforeseen challenges. In the 2021-22 academic year, 194 students were awarded \$187,930, with the majority of funds supporting housing stability.

MSU Denver's efforts to support Latinx students extend through to graduation. The TRiO Student Services program offers academic coaching, financial aid assistance and career development



opportunities. Over four years, the program has served varying numbers of students, with the highest persistence rate reaching 98%.

The Department of Chicana/o Studies plays a pivotal role in supporting Latinx students, boasting a 95% Latinx enrollment rate. The department's retention rate from fall to fall is 88%, with a 100% graduation rate for Chicana/o Studies majors, demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally relevant academic support.

MSU Denver recognizes the importance of representation among faculty and staff. As of December 2021, the University has seen a slight increase in faculty members of color, with 7% of faculty who are Latinx. The Faculty Fellows program and Association of College and University Educators Cohorts are part of the University's strategy to enhance faculty diversity and support inclusive teaching practices.

The Diversity Strategic Plan aims to diversify faculty and staff further to reflect the diverse student body MSU Denver serves. The institution also focuses on leadership representation, with 34.9% of leadership positions held by people of color, including 23.3% by Latinx leaders.

MSU Denver's journey to earning the *Seal of Excelexia* reflects a deep institutional commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for Latinx students. Through strategic initiatives in enrollment, retention, financial support and completion, the University not only supports Latinx students but enriches the entire campus community. As MSU Denver continues to implement and expand these initiatives, it serves as a model for other institutions aiming to achieve equity and excellence in higher education.



Eloté Recipe

Eloté, which is essentially Mexican street corn, has a rich history that traces back to Indigenous cultures in the Americas, particularly in the regions that are now Mexico and Central America. The term “eloté” itself comes from the Nahuatl language, which was spoken by the Aztecs, and it means “tender ear” or “corn cob.” Eloté is a versatile dish that you can adjust to suit your taste preferences. Don't be afraid to get creative and try different variations to discover your favorite way to enjoy this delicious Mexican street food.

Ingredients:

- 4 ears of fresh corn, husked
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup crumbled cotija cheese
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- 4 wooden skewers or corn holders (optional)
- 6. Use a brush or a spoon to generously coat each ear of corn with the mayonnaise-chili mixture.
- 7. Sprinkle crumbled cotija cheese over the mayo-coated corn. You can use as much or as little cheese as you like.

Instructions:

1. Preheat your grill to medium-high heat or use a stove top grill pan.
2. Skewer each corn cob with a wooden skewer or corn holder if desired; this makes it easier to handle and grill.
3. Grill the corn on all sides, turning occasionally, until it's lightly charred and cooked through. This should take about 8-10 minutes.
4. While the corn is grilling, mix the mayonnaise and chili powder in a small bowl. You can adjust the amount of chili powder to your preferred level of spiciness.
5. Once the corn is done, remove it from the grill and allow it to cool slightly.
8. Squeeze fresh lime juice over the eloté.
9. Serve your eloté hot, garnished with extra chili powder and lime wedges on the side.

Instead of serving corn on the cob, you can cut the grilled corn kernels off the cob and serve them in a cup or bowl. Mix in the mayonnaise, cheese, chili powder and lime juice then top with chopped cilantro and diced onions.

Optional Additions:

- Add some heat: Add hot sauce or crushed red pepper flakes.
- Freshen up the dish with herbs such as fresh cilantro or parsley.
- For vegan eloté substitute in vegan mayonnaise and dairy-free cheese.
- Reduce the heat by replacing the chili powder with smoked paprika.
- For a healthier option, use low-fat mayonnaise or Greek yogurt for mayonnaise.

Cultivating Community:

The Impact of Employee Affinity Groups

In addressing employee concerns from the engagement survey, MSU Denver is working to grow and develop its employee affinity groups.

These groups, which focus on diverse aspects of the University community, are becoming integral to fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing job satisfaction and improving retention among faculty and staff.

Affinity group leaders collaborated with leaders from the Provost's Office, Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Human Resources to integrate and institutionalize these groups across campus, leading to securing annual base funding — two exciting and needed steps.

The need for belonging is addressed in part through affinity groups that connect faculty and staff members over shared identities and experiences. These groups offer a vital space for members to seek support and celebrate cultural heritage.

The African American Affairs Council (AAAC) and the Latina/o/x Faculty and Staff Association (LFSA), both long-standing groups, provide platforms for Black and Latina/o/x faculty and staff to discuss their unique experiences, share strategies for overcoming barriers and celebrate their cultural identities. These groups help to mitigate feelings of isolation, particularly for those who may find themselves in the minority within their departments.

The African American Affairs Council facilitates unity, continuity and cohesiveness, addressing the intellectual, educational and social needs of the African and African American community at MSU Denver. By organizing events such as the Black, African and African American Graduation ceremonies, the council honors cultural backgrounds and celebrates academic achievements. This group fosters a communication network between the University and surrounding communities that support diversity, equity and inclusion. Additionally, they provide outreach and support for Black students, alumni and community members. Their efforts help mitigate feelings of isolation and foster a supportive environment

for African American faculty and staff members.

Beyond individual support, affinity groups are about building a community. The Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American (APIDA) Faculty and Staff Alliance provides a sense of belonging through cultural celebrations, professional-development workshops and social gatherings. They have successfully hosted events such as Mile High Asian Food Week and the inaugural student, faculty and staff social during Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Membership remains active and continues to grow, reflecting the alliance's effectiveness in fostering community. Plans include engaging with the APIDA community across the Auraria Campus and establishing a mentoring program. Their efforts strengthen the community and support new and current APIDA faculty and staff members.

Research underscores the positive impact of affinity groups on retention and job satisfaction. A study by the American Council on Education found that employees involved in affinity groups were significantly more likely to remain at their institutions long-term. At MSU Denver, this trend is evident. The Latino/a Faculty and Staff Association has been instrumental in retaining Latino/a faculty and staff members by providing a strong support system and advocating for policies that promote inclusivity.

The Women of Color Collective aims to provide space to intentionally support and facilitate connections for faculty and staff members who identify as women of color. The collective provides a supportive and empowering community that addresses the unique experiences, challenges, and needs of women of color in the academic environment, promoting inclusivity, equity, and professional success. The Women of Color Collective plays a crucial role in promoting and supporting faculty and staff members through representation and visibility, networking and mentorship, advocacy awareness and leadership development.

The Native Nations Council is an inclusive affinity group actively promoting the traditional customs, practices, beliefs and



Faculty and Staff Barbecue
May 2024

way of life of Native people on campus. The council actively works toward creating a positive impact within the Indigenous community at MSU Denver. The council stands out for its unique culture that is deeply rooted in a strong connection to the land, recognizing that Native people are the original inhabitants of this land and supporting an environment where members feel valued, respected and empowered. The Native Nations Council fosters a sense of belonging, emphasizing sustainability with harmonious coexistence with the natural world, providing opportunities for personal and professional development.

Affinity groups also play a crucial role in professional development. The Employee Alumni Network, part of the MSU Denver Alumni Association, leverages its members' shared history to provide mentorship and career advancement opportunities. This network connects alumni who are University employees, facilitating a flow of knowledge and experience that benefits the entire institution.

One of the new groups this year is the Queer Faculty and Staff Collective. This group has created a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees. During the 2023-24 academic year, the collective formalized the affinity group by enrolling 58 members, establishing a name and creating bylaws. The collective has three working committees and hosted four events for faculty and staff, including representing MSU Denver at Denver's Pride Parade in June. Planning for the next year is starting, and the collective looks forward to growing its membership and hosting additional events.

MSU Denver's commitment to diversity and inclusion is further demonstrated by the emergence of new affinity groups. The disabled-faculty-and-staff group, the veterans-and-women-veterans group address the unique needs of employees with disabilities and military and veteran employees respectively. The young-professional group supports those new to academia and their careers, providing support and fostering a sense of belonging from the outset of their careers.

The evolution of employee affinity groups at MSU Denver represents a significant step toward building a more inclusive and supportive environment for all faculty and staff members. These groups are not just a response to the need for diversity and inclusion; they are proactive agents of change. By fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing job satisfaction and improving retention, affinity groups help to create a more cohesive and supportive academic community.

As MSU Denver continues to support and expand these groups, the institution sets a powerful example for others in higher education. In doing so, it enriches the lives of its employees and strengthens the fabric of the entire academic community.

A Decade Committed to Excellence in Diversity



For the past 10 years, MSU Denver has been recognized as a beacon of diversity and inclusion in higher education, earning the prestigious Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award. This accolade, granted by Insight Into Diversity magazine, **celebrates colleges and universities that demonstrate an unwavering commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive campus environment.** MSU Denver's sustained recognition underscores its robust and multifaceted approach to diversity, equity and inclusion.

MSU Denver's journey with the HEED Award began a decade ago, when the University first applied, showcasing its efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion. From those early days, the University has made remarkable strides, transforming itself into a model of inclusivity.

In the early 2010s, MSU Denver's student body was predominantly white, with 21% of students identifying as Hispanic/Latinx. Today, nearly 37% of the student body identifies as Hispanic/Latinx, making MSU Denver one of the most diverse universities in Colorado. This transformation did not happen overnight but was the result of deliberate, sustained efforts to recruit and retain students from historically underrepresented groups.

One of the key drivers of this change has been the Pathways to Possible program, which creates partnerships with local high schools to provide career readiness and financial assistance. This initiative has significantly enhanced access to higher education for diverse student populations. Similarly, the Concurrent Enrollment program allows high school students to take college courses with no tuition or fee costs to the students or their families, fostering early college readiness and increasing enrollment among diverse groups.



Solar Eclipse Event and Observation
April 8, 2024



Denver PrideFest and Parade
June 2024

Supporting students once they are on campus is equally important. The Immigrant Services Program provides academic and social support to undocumented, DACA, immigrant, and refugee students, maintaining retention from fall to spring. The Classroom to Career Hub (C2 Hub) integrates career planning and professional development into students' academic experiences, supporting our over 50% students of color and enhancing their academic and professional trajectories.

Financial assistance has also played a crucial role in MSU Denver's success. The Earn and Learn program offers supplemental funding for students participating in unpaid internships. This initiative has seen an increase in the number of interns. Emergency funds, such as the Student Emergency Retention Fund and the Dreamer Emergency Fund, provide vital financial assistance, supporting housing stability and other critical needs.

Cultural celebrations and community engagement are integral to fostering an inclusive environment.

Signature events such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Breakfast and two visiting professorships bring together the campus community to honor and learn from diverse cultural perspectives. These events, along with numerous others, have become cornerstones of MSU Denver's

commitment to diversity.

Over the years, the University has also made significant strides in diversifying its faculty and staff. The Faculty Recruitment Incentive Program and the Wilton Flemon Postdoctoral Fellowship have been instrumental in increasing the representation of underrepresented faculty members and supporting their professional development. Today, women constitute 48.8% of tenured and tenure-track faculty members and 61.3% of non-tenure-track full-time faculty members.

Institutional support and accountability have been critical to these successes. The Diversity Strategic Plan, developed by the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council, outlines ambitious goals for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion across the university. The DEIC collaborates with various campus and community stakeholders to implement and monitor these goals, ensuring that diversity efforts are data-driven and evidence-based.

Regular assessments of campus climate help identify areas for improvement. For example, MSU Denver's campus climate surveys have led to initiatives aimed at recognizing faculty and staff members for their work, thereby improving morale and fostering a more inclusive environment.

Looking ahead, MSU Denver remains committed to advancing its diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. The University's Diversity Strategic Plan

outlines goals, including enhancing community partnerships, further diversifying faculty and staff, and continuously improving support services for students. By building on its past successes and remaining adaptable to new challenges, MSU Denver aims to continue being a leader in higher education diversity, equity and inclusion.

Being a 10-time recipient of the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award is a testament to MSU Denver's unwavering commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This recognition not only celebrates the University's achievements but also inspires continued efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. As MSU Denver looks to the future, it remains dedicated to fostering a campus where diversity thrives and all students, faculty members and staff members can achieve their fullest potential.

MSU Denver's decade-long journey with the HEED Award exemplifies what it means to make diversity and inclusion a top priority. Through innovative programs, dedicated support services, and a commitment to continuous improvement, the University sets a standard for others to follow in the pursuit of equity and excellence in higher education.

Faculty Fellows Transforming MSU Denver



In the 2023-24 academic year, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion made significant strides in advancing the University's diversity, equity and inclusion goals.

Central to this progress were the efforts of six dedicated faculty fellows from various schools and colleges, whose contributions have been instrumental in enhancing faculty recruitment, retention and overall success.

The Fellows have made substantial contributions through a series of impactful projects. A notable initiative was the improvement of faculty recruitment and retention processes. Comprehensive literature reviews and diversity, equity and inclusion recruitment briefs were developed, focusing on job advertisements, strategic recruiting, committee training and hiring processes. These briefs, shared with MSU Denver leadership, provided actionable strategies that have already begun to refine the University's hiring practices. The Inclusive Faculty Hiring Working Group, co-chaired by a Fellow, played a crucial role in these enhancements.

Another significant project was the multi-year effort in the development of the Campus Climate Survey. This survey, designed to gather feedback from the University community, was developed, piloted and promoted. Its successful launch in March marked a pivotal step

in understanding and improving MSU Denver's campus climate. The preliminary data analysis is in the works but is already informing future initiatives aimed at enhancing the University environment.

The Tenure Track Supper Club was reengaged, offering crucial support to tenure-track faculty members. By developing a sustainable model and connecting it to the Roadrunner Faculty Academy, the Supper Club has seen increased participation of pre-tenure faculty members. The promotion of faculty engagement with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity further underscores the Fellows' commitment to professional development.

The enhancement of EDI scholarship was another area where the EDI Faculty Fellows made a significant impact. By synthesizing articles into the EDI framework and developing briefs and surveys to support faculty retention and recruitment, the Fellows provided valuable insights that are shaping the University's strategic initiatives. Their leadership in DEIC subcommittees and organization of BIPOC gatherings have fostered a supportive community for diverse faculty and reinforced diverse hiring practices.

Affinity groups across campus received renewed support and attention, thanks to the efforts of the EDI Faculty Fellows. By assessing their needs and advocating for dedicated support, these groups have been strengthened, ensuring

their continued impact on campus. The development of a BIPOC Affinity Mentoring program, including identifying potential mentors and facilitating preliminary work, is set to provide even greater support to faculty and staff members.

Throughout the year, the EDI Faculty Fellows have significantly advanced MSU Denver's strategic goals by facilitating inclusive practices, conducting research and analysis, engaging with stakeholders and supporting affinity groups. Their efforts have created a more supportive and inclusive environment for faculty and staff across campus.

The efforts of the EDI Faculty Fellows have laid a strong foundation for continued progress in equity, diversity, and inclusion at MSU Denver. Their work underscores the importance of collaboration, research and community engagement in advancing these critical goals. The contributions of the EDI Faculty Fellows at the University will continue to inspire and inform efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable campus environment.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion remains committed to supporting these efforts and ensuring that EDI principles are integrated into all aspects of University life. The continued dedication and expertise of the EDI Faculty Fellows will be instrumental in achieving these goals and fostering a culture of inclusivity at MSU Denver.



The Departments of Africana Studies and Art at MSU Denver host RAPTivisit, Aisha Fukushima, for an evening performance during the Black World Conference as part of the Music, Race and Social Justice Visiting Artist Series.

Advancing Justice and Cultivating Solidarity



Left to Right:
Marie Mora, Ph.D. Interim Provost
Chalane Lechuga, Ph.D. Professor of Chicana/o Studies
Nancy Lopez, Ph.D., 2023 Richard T. and Virginia M. Castro Distinguished Visiting Professor

“Don’t let anyone rob you of your rights or your joy. Don’t wait for the money to take action. Ask who’s afraid of keeping the data.”

Nancy Lopez, Ph.D.

Metropolitan State University of Denver’s Department of Chicana/o Studies and Office of Diversity and Inclusion welcomed Nancy López, Ph.D., professor of Sociology at the University of New Mexico, as the 2023 Richard T. and Virginia M. Castro Distinguished Visiting Professor. López’s visit was a significant event, challenging attendees to rethink their perspectives on race and intersectionality and to take actionable steps toward advancing justice.

López began her keynote address by highlighting her three guiding cultural truths: “Don’t let anyone rob you of your rights or your joy. Don’t wait for the money to take action. Ask who’s afraid of keeping the data.” These principles framed her discussion, setting a critical and engaging tone for the evening.

As the co-founder of the Institute for the Study of “Race” and Social Justice

and the New Mexico Statewide Race, Gender, Class Data Policy Consortium, López shared insights from her research, including her 2003 book “Hopeful Girls, Troubled Boys: Race and Gender Disparity in Urban Education.” Her work illustrates the significant variations in graduation rates when considering race, socioeconomic status and gender together. “We have to talk about place, space and history. That includes race, class, and gender — we have to look at it all together,” she emphasized.

López critiqued the limitations of traditional statistical analyses that often fail to capture the complexities of intersectional identities. She argued for an ethical commitment to addressing equity gaps and making the invisible visible. “There’s a visceral opposition to looking at the simultaneity of all elements together,” she noted. “What are you afraid you’ll learn?”

In her discussion of “street race” — a person’s perceived racial status — López examined how the U.S. census conflates race with ethnicity and country of origin, thus obscuring intersectionality. She referenced localized survey results indicating that one in every five participants identified simply as “brown,” highlighting the need for more nuanced questions about race and identity. “Why has there been such a push to test questions that don’t use the word ‘race’?” she asked. “What does that mean when assuming Latinidad can only look one way?”

López concluded by urging attendees to identify personal action items for advancing justice, reflecting on their domains of influence. She encouraged the cultivation of flexible solidarity, the navigation of resistance to change, and the advancement of intersectionality in inquiry and practice. “It’s not just curriculum; it’s pedagogy,” she asserted. “It’s ‘both and.’ The difference is centering cultural wealth and creating community, love, and compassion.”

López’s visit to MSU Denver provided the audience with valuable insights and actionable steps to foster equity and inclusion, reinforcing the University’s commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Energizing MSU Denver With Dance and Social Justice

MSU Denver experienced an extraordinary week as Cleo Parker Robinson, a luminary in dance and social justice, took center stage as the 2024 Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professor.

Robinson's presence transformed the campus into a hub of cultural celebration and profound dialogue, underscoring the University's dedication to diversity and community engagement.

Robinson, renowned for her role as the founder and artistic director of the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, has built a career intertwining the art of dance with social activism. Her visit to MSU Denver was a testament to her life's mission of using movement to inspire and unify people across all walks of life. The theme for this year's professorship, "Uplifting Community Through Movement," perfectly encapsulated her philosophy and the spirit she brought to the University.

The series of events kicked off with a vibrant keynote address in which Robinson shared her journey and the pivotal moments that shaped her as an artist and activist. Growing up during the Jim Crow era, Robinson learned to channel her experiences into a powerful form of expression. She spoke passionately about the significance of dance as a tool for social change, emphasizing that "movement is a right that everyone deserves." Her words resonated deeply with the audience, igniting a collective resolve to continue the fight for equality and justice.

A standout moment of Robinson's visit was the masterclass she conducted with MSU Denver's Dance Program. This wasn't just a dance lesson; it was an immersion into the philosophy that has guided her work for decades. Students were not only taught dance techniques but were encouraged to explore the emotional and spiritual dimensions of movement. Robinson's mantra, "One Spirit, Many Voices," came alive as students of diverse backgrounds found common ground through the art of dance. The energy in the room was palpable as Robinson seamlessly blended instruction with inspiration, leaving a lasting impact on every participant.



Robinson's influence extends far beyond the dance studio. She has been a relentless advocate for bringing the arts to underprivileged and marginalized communities. Her numerous accolades, including the Kennedy Center Master of African American Choreography honor and the National Medal of Arts, are a testament to her tireless work and the transformative power of her artistry. Her visit to MSU Denver was a celebration of Rachel Noel's legacy and an opportunity for the University community to engage with a living legend.

The Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship, established in 1981 to honor the legacy of civil-rights leader Rachel B. Noel, continues to bring remarkable individuals such as Robinson to MSU Denver. This year's events were a vibrant blend of performances, workshops and lectures that highlighted the intersection of art and activism. Robinson's tenure as the Distinguished Visiting Professor not only honored Noel's legacy but reinforced MSU Denver's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment.

The collaboration between Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and the University's Dance Program is a unique partnership that bridges professional dance with academic excellence. Students benefit from this synergy, gaining hands-on

experience with seasoned professionals while earning academic credit. This partnership exemplifies MSU Denver's innovative approach to education, where the arts are integral to the broader mission of social justice and community-building.

Robinson's visit culminated in a community performance that brought together people from all over Denver. The performance was a powerful demonstration of how dance can transcend cultural and social barriers, creating a shared experience that unites everyone in the audience. As the final notes of the music faded, the sense of solidarity and hope was unmistakable, a fitting conclusion to a series of events that left an indelible mark on all who attended.

Cleo Parker Robinson's time at MSU Denver was more than a visit; it was a vibrant celebration of the arts, a profound engagement with social justice issues, and a powerful reminder of the University's role in fostering a diverse and inclusive community. Her influence will be felt long after the applause has died down, inspiring future generations to dance, advocate, and create with the same passion and dedication she has shown throughout her illustrious career.

Celebration of Legacy and Activism at MSU Denver



Each year, MSU Denver celebrates the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with the highly anticipated Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Breakfast. This event, which has become a powerful convergence of voices calling for justice and equality, exemplifies MSU Denver's commitment to diversity and social change.

The breakfast took place at the Tivoli Turnhalle, drawing a full house of attendees eager to engage in meaningful dialogue and reflection. This year's theme, "Fight the Power," resonated deeply with the attendees, reflecting the enduring relevance of Dr. King's message in today's social and political climate.



A highlight of the event was the Black History 101 Mobile Museum, founded by Khalid el-Hakim, Ph.D (pictured at left). This mobile museum captivated attendees with its dynamic displays on black history and the evolution of music into hip-hop. El-Hakim’s insights on societal progress added depth to the museum’s visual impact, engaging the audience in a profound exploration of Black heritage and its continuing influence.

Adding to the event’s resonance, Maryum “May May” Ali, daughter of legendary boxer and activist Muhammad Ali, shared inspiring stories about her father’s legacy and her own impactful work in social justice. Her narratives of resilience and activism served as a poignant reminder of the personal and communal power inherent in the fight for equality.

The highlight of the event was the powerful words of Professor Griff, co-founder of seminal hip-hop group Public Enemy. His perspectives on systemic challenges and historical racial inequities energized the crowd, sparking a renewed commitment to advocacy. Professor Griff’s presence brought a direct connection to the event’s theme, “Fight the Power,” a phrase that has become an indelible part of American culture through Public Enemy’s iconic song of the same name. His discourse on the music industry and social responsibility within hip-hop culture was enlightening and motivating.

The event also recognized three outstanding community leaders with the MLK Peace Award, honoring their contributions to promoting peace, justice, diversity, equality, and social change. This year’s awardees were John Bailey, a community leader; Amber Mozet, an MSU Denver graduate and advocate; and Alfonzo Porter, a posthumous honoree who significantly impacted the MSU Denver community and beyond.

The MLK Peace Breakfast not only commemorates the life and philosophy of Dr. King but serves as a call to action for all attendees. It unites the MSU Denver community in the collective pursuit of equality and justice, reinforcing the University’s dedication to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion leads, collaborates with and engages with many of the efforts outlined in this report. We know this is a team effort with all the partners across MSU Denver: the staff, faculty and students who have made this work possible.

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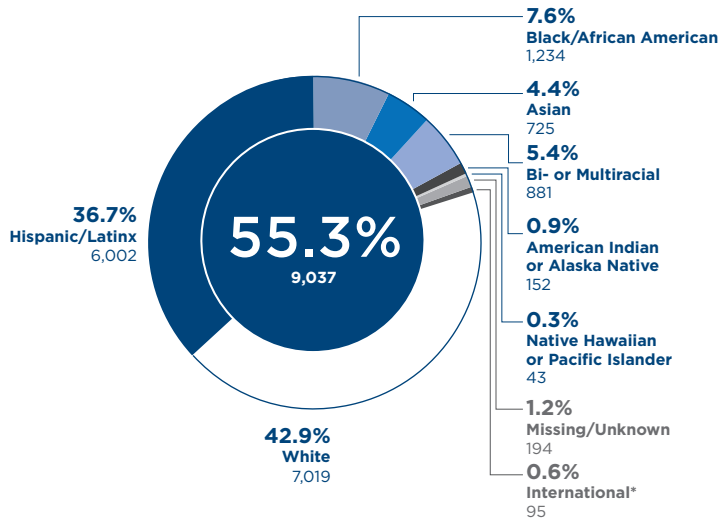
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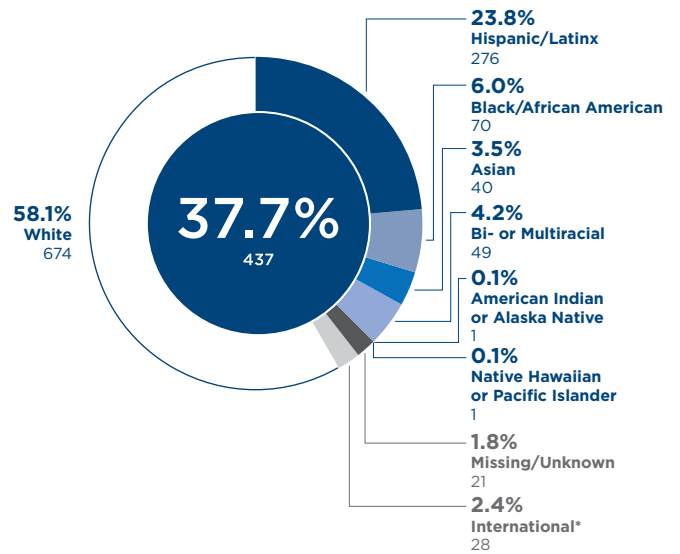
¹Graduated 2024

Demographic Profile

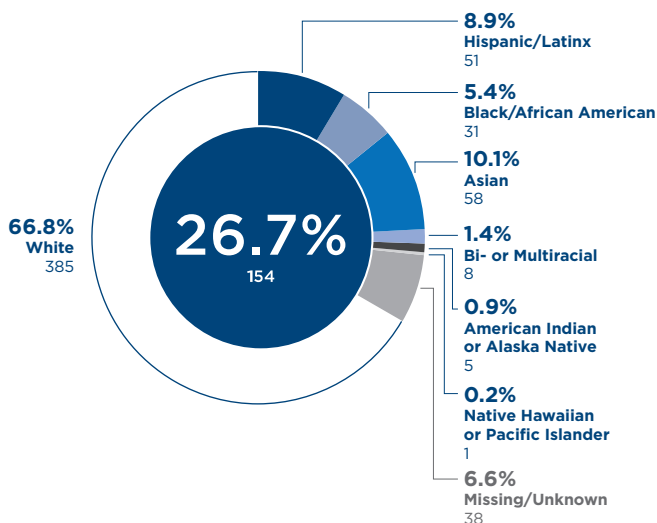
Undergraduate Students of Color



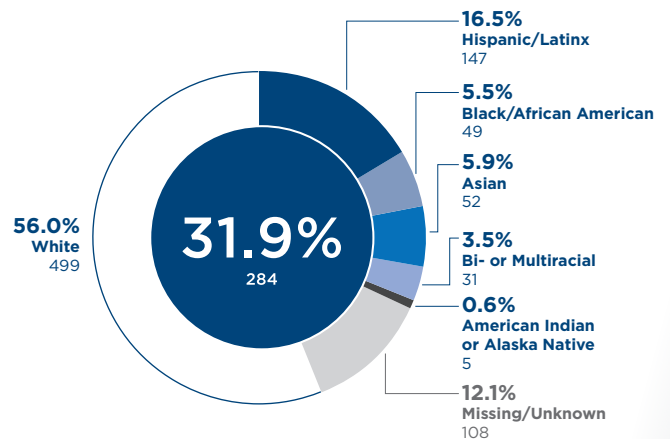
Graduate Students of Color



Full-time Faculty of Color



Full-time Staff of Color



* "International" and "Missing/Unknown" statistics are not included in total people of color count.
 No Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander full-time staff members recorded.
 All Statistics accurate as of Fall 2023.



2024-25 Equity Events

2024

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September

Latinx Heritage Month: Sept. 15 - Oct. 15

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

October

LGBTQIA+ History Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

November

Native and Indigenous People's Heritage Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Dream.US Open House	August 2
Orientación Familiar	August 3
Native-Indigenous Student Orientation	August 14
Convocation	August 15
First day of Fall Semester	August 19
Welcome Week	August 19-22
LGBTQ Student Resource Center Kickoff	August 21
Community Collab Summit	August 23
First-Generation Campus Welcome	August 27
Welcome Back Paleta Party	August 28
Sister Circles: Coffee and Chat	September 9
Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC)	September 10
Sister Circles: Coffee and Chat	September 11
HSI Week	September 16-20
Latinx Heritage Month Celebration of Culture	September 16
Constitution Day/ National Voter Registration Day	September 17
Movie Night - A Million Miles Away	September 18
Cocina de los Correcaminos - Tamales	September 18
HSI Servingness Reception	September 19
Colorado HSI Summit	September 20
Viva Southwest Mariachi Festival	September 20
ChicanXs and Palestine: History and Solidarity	October 2
Castro Professorship	October 8
Native-Indigenous Community Author Event	October 8-9
Annual Critical Discussion on Race	October 8-9
"Stand with Immigrants" Day of Action	October 9
Coming Out Day Brunch	October 10
UndocuResource Day for Educators	October 11
Latinx Heritage Month Food Demo: Gorditas	October 15
Sister Circles: Engaging with Politics	October 23
3rd Annual Women and Gender in Leadership Summit	October 25
Día De Los Muertos	October 30
Native Indigenous Heritage Month Kickoff	November 4
Election Day: Watch Party	November 5
Veterans Day Resource Fair and Ceremony	November 11
Honoring our Native American Veterans	November 12
Sister Circles: Stay-A-Float	November 18
Native Identity and the Three Facets to It	November 19
Transgender Day of Remembrance	November 20
First-Generation Graduation	December 2
Lavender Graduation Ceremony	December 3
Latinx Graduation	December 4
Native Indigenous Graduation Celebration	December 6
Black, African and African American Graduation	December 10
Veteran Graduation Ceremony	December 12
University Commencement	December 13



University Events



Holidays and Observances

- Equity Event
- Multiple Equity Events
- University Event

2025

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February

Black History Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

March

Women's History Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

(MSU Denver Observes AAPI Heritage Month in April)

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- 2 Equity Event
- 3 Multiple Equity Events
- 4 University Event



MLK Peace Breakfast	January 17
MLK Parade	January 20
Welcome Week	January 21-23
LGBTQ SRC Open House	January 28
Black History Month Kickoff	February 4
Sister Circles: Yoga and Henna	February 10
Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC)	February 12
42nd Annual Black World Conference	February 18-19
33rd Bridge Speaker	February 27
Black History Month - Culture Night	February 28
Women's History Month Kickoff	March 4
LGBTQ Event	March 5
Ramadan: Classroom Inclusivity and Cultural Understanding	March 6
AAHHE Conference	March 7-8
Greek Week	March 10-14
Sister Circles: Tea Time	March 12
Transgender Day of Visibility	March 31
AAPI Heritage Month Kickoff	April 1
1Book/1Project/2Transform Keynote	April 2
AAPI Heritage Month Networking Event	April 8
Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC)	April 10
Men of Color Leadership Summit	April 11
Sister Circles: End of Year Celebration	April 18
OSILA Gala	April 22
AAPI Graduation Celebration	April 29
Lavender Graduation Ceremony	April 30
Native Indigenous Graduation Celebration	May 2
4th Annual Auraria Powwow	May 3
Latinx Graduation	May 7
Veteran Graduation Ceremony	May 15
University Commencement	May 16
Dreamer Graduation	TBD



MSU
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