



COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE OF  
DENVER



## DR. MARIELENA DESANCTIS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

December 2024

### President Dr. DeSanctis Visits White House Reception



CCD President Dr. Marielena DeSanctis

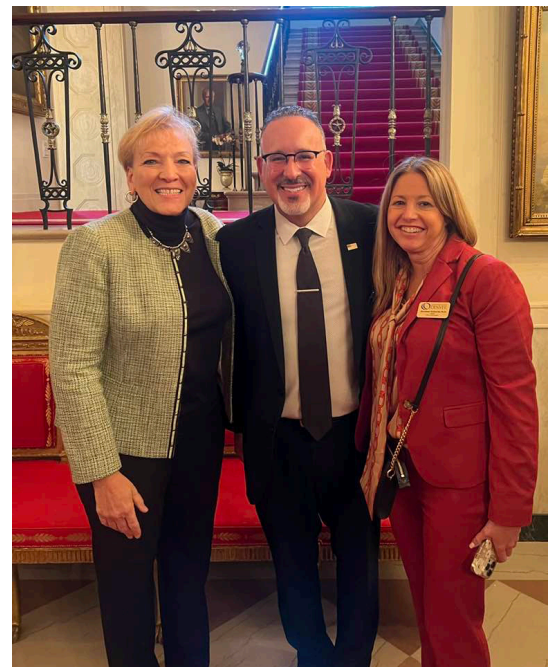
critical conversations were held about creating accessible opportunities for students and workers alike.

In a letter to sent to the CCD community, Dr. DeSanctis reflects on this inspiring event, sharing insights from the reception and reaffirming CCD's commitment to empowering our students and community through education. Her

On November 13th, CCD President Dr. Marielena DeSanctis had the distinct honor of representing Community College of Denver at the White House for an event that brought together leaders from across the country to discuss building stronger connections between education and high-demand careers. This remarkable experience preceded the U.S. Department of Education's "Classroom to Career Summit," where

reflection offers a glimpse into how national conversations about career pathways connect to our shared mission of fostering opportunity, growth, and success for every CityHawk.

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Left to Right: Executive Director of CDHE Dr. Angie Paccione; Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona; CCD President Dr. Marielena DeSanctis



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# From the President's Desk

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## President Dr. DeSanctis Visits White House Reception

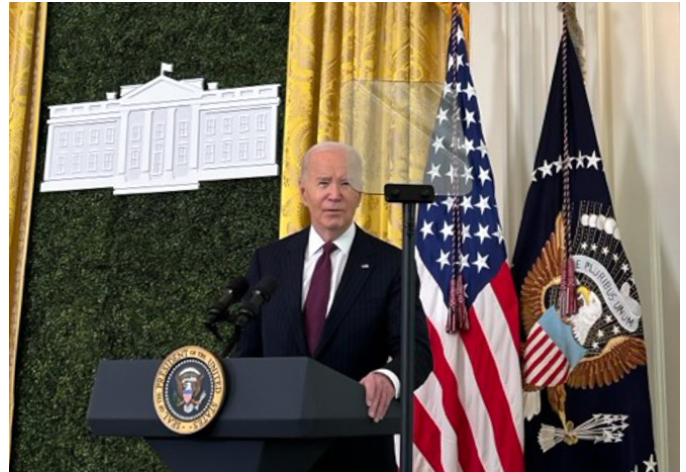
*Dear CityHawks,*

*Last week, I had the privilege of joining about 200 higher education and workforce leaders invited to the White House for a Reception on Career Pathways, an event preceding the U.S. Department of Education's "Classroom to Career Summit." This gathering brought together voices from across the nation—Cabinet members, Administration officials, state and local elected officials, community college presidents, K-12 leaders, unions, workforce development leaders from the nine [White House Workforce Hubs](#), business leaders, representatives of philanthropic organizations, students, and other communities across the country—all united by a shared purpose: to expand career pathways and empower individuals to thrive in high-demand industries.*



Left to Right: Secretary of Labor Julie Su; Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg; Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona; and panel moderator

*At the reception, we had the honor of hearing directly from President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, who shared the administration's vision for [Investing in America](#). Their remarks, alongside those of the president's*



U.S. President Joe Biden

*cabinet, highlighted historic efforts to create millions of good-paying jobs—many of which do not require a four-year degree—and to expand opportunities in fields like infrastructure, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing.*

*Through the American Rescue Plan, more than \$80 billion has been committed to strengthening and diversifying the workforce, supporting high-quality free community college programs in high-demand fields, expanding registered apprenticeships, and attracting and retaining a skilled, diverse workforce in critical industries.*



First Lady Dr. Jill Biden

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# From the President's Desk

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(White House Reception - continued from page 2)

*Following the reception, the “Classroom to Career Summit” explored how education and industry leaders can build bridges from learning to earning, aligning education with workforce needs to unlock economic opportunity for students and workers across the country.*

*As I reflect on this experience, I am humbled and deeply grateful for the blessing to have participated in such an important moment. Walking through the White House, surrounded by its history, I felt the gravity of what this space represents—not just for our nation, but for the ideals of democracy and opportunity it upholds. Regardless of personal political views, everyone in attendance carried a shared reverence for the significance of the U.S. presidency, the symbolism of the White House, and the role of both in history. It’s a memory that will stay with me forever.*

*In times of change, it’s natural to feel a sense of unease about what the future holds. Elections may influence the world around us, yet **what grounds us at CCD remains steady:** our commitment to each other, to the students we serve, and to the values we share. It is in these moments that our dedication to creating a welcoming, supportive, and successful community shines even brighter.*

***At the heart of CCD is a promise**—to uplift and empower every individual who walks through our doors and improve the economic trajectory of their lives forever through higher education. CCD will always be a place where you belong, where your voice matters, and where your aspirations are honored and supported. We are here for you, with open hearts and open doors, to help you navigate whatever challenges in your educational journey may arise.*



CCD President Dr. Marielena DeSanctis

*Thank you to everyone who made it possible for me to attend this momentous event. Your flexibility and support remind me why this community is so special. Together, as a leadership team and as a college, we are working tirelessly to ensure that every CityHawk can excel, thrive, and achieve the American dream. Through your success, we all contribute to a stronger future.*

*With gratitude,  
Dr. Marielena DeSanctis  
President, Community College of Denver*

**Source:** Community College of Denver’s CityHawk Talk  
[“President Dr. DeSanctis Visits White House Reception”](#)



# Transform the Student Experience

## Community College of Denver Earns 2024 First Generation-Serving Campus Designation

*From the CCD Press Room*

On November 7, 2024, the Community College of Denver (CCD) is proudly announced its recent designation as a First Generation-Serving Institution by the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). This recognition underscores CCD's commitment to supporting first-generation students and providing the resources they need to thrive academically and personally. This designation, based on enrollment, reflects CDHE's dedication to promoting educational equity and student success.



The timing of this designation perfectly coincided with CCD's annual First Generation Celebration. The event held on campus on November 7th, highlighted the accomplishments of first-generation students, fostering a welcoming space for the community to engage, learn, and celebrate together.

Attendees enjoyed a morning of engaging activities and shared stories from first-generation students and alumni who have blazed new trails as the first in their families to pursue higher education.



VP of Student Services Tina Garcia and CCD student

“We are deeply honored to be recognized as a First Generation-Serving Institution,” said President Marielena DeSanctis. “At CCD, our faculty, instructors and staff work tirelessly to support, uplift, and empower first-generation students. They create a campus community where these students can thrive, grow, and realize their potential. Our first-generation students bring a special kind of resilience, and it’s our privilege to stand beside them on their journey.”



For more information about the First Generation-Serving Institution Designation, visit the Colorado Department of Higher Education's website at <https://cdhe.colorado.gov/first-gen>.



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# Transform the Student Experience

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## CCD's Engineering Momentum STEM Core Program

Imagine being part of a program that not only teaches you advanced math but also connects you to industry giants like NASA—while offering the support you need to overcome life's barriers. That's exactly what Community College of Denver's (CCD) Engineering Momentum: STEM Core program offers to underserved and underrepresented students, including minorities, women, and veterans. The program's primary goal? To prepare students for Calculus within a year, setting them up for long-term success in math and engineering.

### *Holistic Support for Students*

People learn in various ways, and CCD's Engineering Momentum program recognizes this. Students work in cohorts, taking classes together for the full year-long program, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. Along with working together, students receive weekly support from an academic counselor who attends their math classes, ensuring they stay accountable and overcome any challenges.

Celeste Pegues-Rios is CCD's Engineering Momentum STEM Core Student Support Specialist. "My role as the Student Support Specialist for the Engineering Momentum Grant/STEM Core program is to show up for my students in a more holistic way than they would get from an average advisor. I am in their math classes holding them accountable to showing up for their education and helping them navigate life barriers that may prevent them from making their education a priority," said Pegues-Rios. Pegues-Rios also crafts and curates workshops, field trips, and interactive learning experiences that give students a hands-on look into the industry.



### *Real World Connections*

In addition to the academic support, the program introduces students to industry professionals through guest speakers, allowing them to gain insights into the day-to-day realities of their future careers. This exposure can profoundly impact a student's career path.

CCD's Engineering Momentum program goes even further by offering internships, guided tours of leading organizations like NASA, and transfer guidance to notable four-year universities such as the University of Colorado Boulder and Denver. These connections between the classroom and the real world equip students with both the knowledge and the experience they need to thrive.

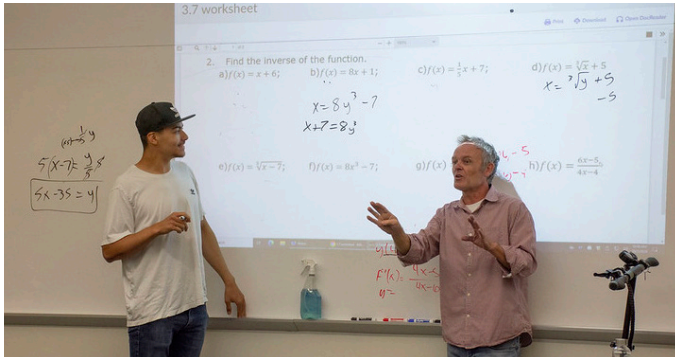
### *A Transformative Student Experience*

"This program has provided me with the support I need to succeed as a non-traditional student who is returning to school in my 20s," commented Therese Stewart, CCD student. Stewart plans to continue her higher education journey at a four-year university for computer science or applied mathematics.

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# Transform the Student Experience

*(STEM Core Program - continued from page 5)*



Emily Serrano, a civil engineering major, shares a similar sentiment: “The [Engineering Momentum: STEM Core Program] has helped me better understand what I find fulfilling in my career. The program was well worth my time and energy, and I would recommend it to any engineering student who has the opportunity to join.”

## Investing in Students' Success

Beyond providing academic and emotional support, the Engineering Momentum program offers tangible financial resources. Students receive a stipend of up to \$1,250 for their participation, reducing the financial barriers that can often hinder success.

With opportunities to learn and grow both personally and professionally, this program prioritizes students' needs every step of the way. Don't miss the chance to be part of a program designed to put your future first. Learn more about Community College of Denver's Engineering Momentum: STEM Core program and how you can start your journey today by visiting <https://www.ccd.edu/stemcore>.

**Source:** Community College of Denver's *CityHawk Talk*  
*"CCD's Engineering Momentum STEM Core Program"*

## Echoes of Creation: Showcasing the Future of Design

On October 24th, the CU Denver Experience Gallery at the Denver Center for Performing Arts Complex buzzed with excitement as Community College of Denver's Multimedia Graphic Design students proudly unveiled their Capstone Show, Echoes of Creation. Nestled in the heart of the Denver Performing Arts Complex, the exhibition serves as the culmination of the students' hard work and creativity, bridging the gap between the classroom and the professional design world.

The opening event, held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., offered a unique platform for students to connect with industry professionals, alumni, prospective students, and the broader Denver community. Attendees explored a gallery filled with innovative designs, product concepts, and branding projects, all reflecting the diverse talents and aspirations of CCD's design students.



(continues on page 7)



# Transform the Student Experience

*(Echoes of Creation - continued from page 6)*

As visitors moved through the gallery, they encountered everything from visually stunning posters and digital interfaces to merchandise displays crafted with professional-grade quality. One student showcased their clothing line, “Righteous,” blending graphic design with entrepreneurial flair. Another display featured sleek branding concepts for a minimalist almond milk product, “One & Only Almond,” which captivated the audience with its modern aesthetic and compelling market potential.

The exhibition served as more than just a showcase; it was a celebration of how CCD nurtures talent and empowers students to bring their unique visions to life. Whether you’re an art enthusiast, industry leader, or curious community member, Echoes of Creation offers a glimpse into the bright future of design innovation.

Selected pieces from the exhibition are now on display in CCD’s Glass Art Gallery, located on the first floor of the Cherry Creek Building on the Auraria Campus.



CCD's Glass Art Gallery

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# Transform the Student Experience

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## Gratitude Blooms at CCD: A Heartwarming Celebration of Thanks

This week, the Confluence Lobby at Community College of Denver radiated warmth and positivity as students, faculty, and staff came together to celebrate gratitude and connection through the Gratitude Wall event. Hosted by the Communication Club and Behavioral Health Club, this initiative invited the CCD community to reflect on what they're thankful for and share those thoughts in a tangible, collective way.

The centerpiece of the event was the beautiful Gratitude Tree, adorned with colorful leaves bearing heartfelt notes of thanks. Attendees of all backgrounds paused during their busy days to write their messages and contribute to this growing symbol of appreciation and community. The atmosphere was one of reflection, smiles, and a shared sense of purpose—a reminder of the strength found in gratitude.

A special highlight took place on Wednesday, November 20, when the Canna Club served hot chocolate and tea from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Participants sipped their cozy drinks while sharing their notes of gratitude, creating a relaxed and inviting space for conversation and connection.

The Gratitude Wall was open for participation from Tuesday, November 19, through Thursday, November 21, giving everyone an opportunity to reflect, connect, and celebrate the season of thanks.

This event not only brought warmth to the campus but also highlighted the importance of taking a moment to acknowledge the good in our lives. As one participant shared, "It's refreshing to pause and recognize what we're grateful for—it makes everything feel lighter."



Whether it was a simple "thank you" for friends, family, or a kind gesture, the Gratitude Wall fostered a sense of unity at CCD, reminding everyone that even the smallest expressions of gratitude can leave a lasting impact.

Events like this showcase the heart of CCD's community—one that values reflection, connection, and well-being. In a fast-paced world, taking the time to appreciate and share gratitude strengthens bonds and creates a ripple effect of positivity.

Missed the Gratitude Wall? Keep the spirit alive by taking a moment to share your own message of thanks with those around you. Gratitude is always in season.



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# Transform the Student Experience

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## Celebrating Native American Heritage Month at CCD

On Tuesday, November 19, CCD's Confluence Assembly Rooms came alive with vibrant energy and meaningful reflection as CityHawks gathered to honor Native American Heritage Month. Hosted by CCD's Student Programming, Activities, and Resource Center (SPARC), the event created a space for education, celebration, and community.

Attendees were greeted with an array of free resources, offering insights into the rich history and culture of Native peoples. From informational materials to engaging discussions, the event emphasized the importance of understanding and appreciating Native American contributions to our shared history.

One of the event's most popular highlights was the "Decolonize Your Diet" recipe exchange, where participants explored traditional Indigenous recipes and food practices that celebrate sustainability and ancestral knowledge. The exchange provided both inspiration and practical ways to incorporate Indigenous food traditions into everyday life, sparking enthusiastic conversations among attendees.

Adding to the excitement, the first 25 students to arrive received a free book, carefully selected to deepen understanding of Native heritage. The giveaway encouraged students to continue learning beyond the event.

The event also featured a free lunch for students, provided by Tocabe: An American Indian Eatery, which served delicious, authentic Indigenous cuisine. Students gathered over shared meals, engaging in conversations about culture, heritage, and the significance of Native American Heritage Month. The aroma of fresh fry bread and other traditional dishes created



a warm and inviting atmosphere, drawing in curious passersby.

One student attendee shared, "It's powerful to see our college take time to recognize Native American culture and history. Events like this help us connect with each other and learn in meaningful ways."

For those who attended, the event was a celebration of community, culture, and connection. Events like these reflect CCD's dedication to promoting inclusivity and celebrating the diverse heritage of its students.

Whether you attended or missed out, the takeaways from this gathering are clear: Learning about and honoring Native culture enriches all of us, making our campus a stronger, more connected community.



Photo Credit: Tocabe

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# Transform the Student Experience

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## A Satirical Hit: CCD Theatre's The Thanksgiving Play Delivers Laughs and Reflection

The CCD Studio Theatre at the King Center was a buzz as audiences gathered for the opening weekend of *The Thanksgiving Play*, a satirical comedy written by award-winning playwright Larissa FastHorse. Directed by Landin Melendez with original music by Molly Zachary, the production offered a sharp, hilarious, and thought-provoking look at cultural representation, biases, and the challenges of creating “politically correct” art.

The play follows a group of well-meaning white theater artists attempting to devise a Thanksgiving play for an elementary school, only to spiral into chaos as they wrestle with their own cultural insensitivity and lack of Native representation. FastHorse’s biting humor paired with the stellar performances of the CCD cast had the audience laughing out loud while contemplating deeper social issues.

The intimate setting of the CCD Studio Theatre made the audience feel immersed in the characters’ misguided but heartfelt attempts to “get it right.”

“I loved how it made me laugh but also think critically about how we approach representation,” said one audience member. “It’s a reminder that we all have blind spots to confront.”

At a time when conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion are more important than ever, *The Thanksgiving Play* offered a timely and entertaining exploration of these themes. By choosing a satirical comedy, CCD Theatre not only entertained its audience but also sparked meaningful reflection on cultural representation in creative spaces.





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# Transform the Student Experience

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## SGA's Midterm Mixer: A Festive Break for Students at CCD

On October 16, CCD's Student Government Association (SGA) transformed the Confluence Assembly Rooms into a vibrant hub of energy, learning, and connection for its Midterm Mixer. Designed to offer students a refreshing break from the pressures of midterms, the event combined practical resources with fun activities, making it both informative and entertaining.

Attendees were greeted by representatives from various CCD departments, clubs, and organizations, all eager to share valuable insights about the resources and opportunities available on campus. Whether learning about academic support, joining a student organization, or exploring ways to enhance their college experience, students left better equipped to navigate their journey at CCD.

Adding to the event's festive atmosphere was the costume theme, which many participants fully embraced. From whimsical to spooky, creative outfits sparked conversations and added a playful touch to the day. The room buzzed with laughter and connection as students mingled, participated in engaging games, and enjoyed the complimentary snacks provided.

A highlight of the event was the raffle, which drew excitement as students eagerly entered for a chance to win prizes. The activities and games scattered throughout the room further enhanced the interactive experience, fostering a sense of camaraderie among attendees.

## PTK Fall Meet & Greet Brings Connection and Celebration to CCD

On Friday, October 25, the Experience Gallery in Denver gathered students, family, and friends for the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society's Fall Meet & Greet. This lively event offered attendees a chance to connect, celebrate, and learn more about the organization's impactful initiatives, all within a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere.

From the moment guests arrived, they were met with the warmth and enthusiasm of PTK members, eager to share the honor society's mission and invite others into their community. The day featured a mix of engaging activities, special announcements, and introductions to the individuals who make PTK a cornerstone of academic excellence at Community College of Denver.



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# Transform the Student Experience

*(PTK Meet & Greet - continued from page 11)*



A highlight of the event was the interactive activities, designed to spark conversation and camaraderie. Whether participating in games or mingling over delicious treats, attendees found plenty of opportunities to build connections and celebrate achievements. Families and friends joined in the fun, creating a diverse and dynamic gathering that truly showcased the strength of the CCD community.

The Experience Gallery, situated across Speer Boulevard in the heart of Denver's theater district, provided the perfect backdrop for the festivities. Its inviting atmosphere and central location made it easy for attendees to drop in and enjoy the day.

More than a celebration, the Fall Meet & Greet was a powerful reminder of the value of community and the opportunities PTK offers to students. By fostering connections and recognizing academic success, the event underscored PTK's role in empowering CCD students to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

For those who missed it, the event served as an open invitation to learn more about PTK's mission and future events. As one attendee put it, "This isn't only about recognition—it's about building something bigger together."





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# Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

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## CCD's Happy Harvest Decorating Contest: A Festive Showcase of Creativity

This year's Happy Harvest Decorating Contest brought festive cheer and brilliant creativity to Community College of Denver, as departments across campus transformed their spaces with imaginative displays. From spooky cobwebs to colorful cultural tributes, the competition highlighted the incredible efforts of CCD staff and students to make the campus a more welcoming and enjoyable space.

After much anticipation, the results are in! Here's a look at the winners and their standout contributions:

### CityHawks' Choice Award:

#### *Momentum Credit and Testing Center*

With their eerie cobwebs, glowing decorations, and delicious pumpkin bread, this team captured the most votes from the CCD community. Their “**dark and spooky**” theme was a perfect blend of festive fun and culinary treats!



### Outstanding Use of Color and Space:

#### *TRIO Offices*

The TRIO team delivered a stunning **Día de los Muertos** ofrenda that was as meaningful as it was beautiful. Their vibrant display, complete with papel picado, marigolds, and personal tributes, honored tradition while bringing a burst of color and culture to the competition.



### Most Complete and Compelling Narrative:

#### *IT/HS Connections*

Taking us straight to the Land of Oz, the IT/HS Connections team created a whimsical **Wizard of Oz** themed display. Complete with a yellow brick road, a spooky twist on Dorothy, and nods to the beloved tale, their decorations transported viewers to another world.



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# Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

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*(Happy Harvest - continued from page 13)*

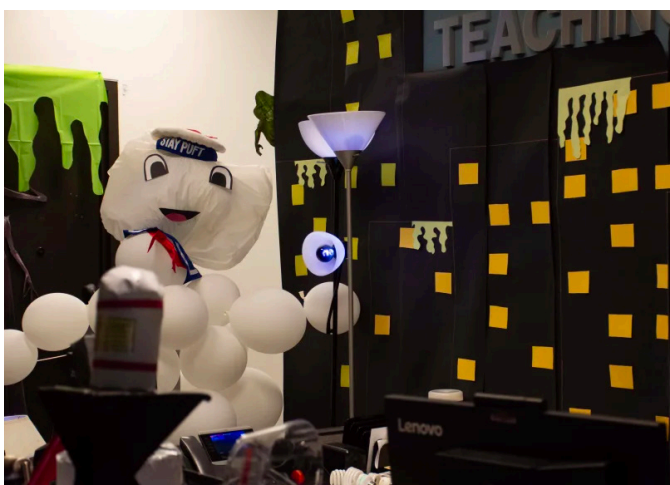
## **Best Thematic Tribute (Tie):**

*Financial Aid and Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)*

The judges couldn't pick between these two outstanding entries. Financial Aid wowed with their **Alice in Wonderland** theme, combining the fantastical and the eerie with precision.



Meanwhile, the TLC embraced a nostalgic **Ghostbusters** theme, complete with “slime” dripping from their walls and a giant Stay Puff Marshmallow Man balloon sculpture.



## **Honorable Mentions:**

- *Spookiest Doll: ACD & STEM Front Offices*
  - Their creepy straw doll sent shivers down the spine of anyone who walked by.
- *Most Interactive: EXCEL! Zone*
  - Their hands-on pumpkin and leaf displays encouraged everyone to get involved.
- *Best Use of Inflatables: Business and Manufacturing Pathway*
  - A giant inflatable pumpkin monster and a swarm of bats brought playful frights to their corner of campus.

## **A Celebration of Community Spirit**

The Happy Harvest Decorating Contest went beyond friendly competition—it fostered a sense of community, creativity, and joy across campus. Departments came together to craft displays that showcased their unique personalities and brought seasonal magic to CCD.

All winners received a prize courtesy of the Human Resources team. Congratulations to the winners and all participants for their incredible efforts!



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# Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

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## Creative Welding Workshop: Bringing Art and Community to CCD

What do welding, reindeer, and stars have in common? At CCD's Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC), it's the magic of creative workshops that bring staff, students, and the community together for hands-on learning and fun.

On Saturday, November 2, CCD's Welding Department hosted one of its popular non-credit workshops, where participants learned to weld while creating personalized metal art. The class welcomed a diverse group, including CCD staff like Bia Mendes from Purchasing and Joy Schalders-Burton from Academic Advising, who celebrated her daughter Sylvia's 17th birthday with this unique experience.

Instructors Jessica Schechter, an adjunct welding instructor, and Moira Barr, the AMC Lab Coordinator, guided participants through the process. From donning safety gear to cutting and shaping steel with precision tools, attendees got a hands-on introduction to welding techniques, including MIG welding. The results? A collection of impressive creations like two-foot-tall reindeer, stars, and candlesticks, all completed in just one day.



Joy shared, "It was an unforgettable experience. Seeing Sylvia's smile as she worked with molten steel made the day extra special."

The workshop also demonstrated the incredible community spirit at CCD. Student volunteers supported the event, ensuring everyone felt comfortable and confident in trying something new. Participants praised the high-quality instruction and the state-of-the-art equipment provided at AMC.

Interested in trying welding yourself? Stop by Academic Advising to admire the reindeer display or reach out to Moira Barr at [Moira.Barr@ccd.edu](mailto:Moira.Barr@ccd.edu) to join the waiting list for future sessions. With workshops priced between \$140-\$200, they're an excellent value and a great way to explore your creative side.

Don't miss your chance to spark something new—whether it's a skill, a project, or a connection. The next welding session will be scheduled based on instructor availability and community interest. Get ready to melt metal and craft memories!

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# Transform Our Own Workforce Experience

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## Provost Announces Launch of CCD's AI Governance Committee

Community College of Denver (CCD) is embracing the future of technology with the formation of an AI Governance Committee, a strategic step aimed at integrating artificial intelligence into the college's operations, education, and culture. Co-led by Provost Peter Lindstrom and Director of Information Technology Leisa Schievelbein, the initiative builds on the foundational work of CCD's AI Task Force and sets the stage for transformative innovation.

This committee's goals are clear: to create a phased AI program and five-year roadmap that align with CCD's mission, strategic plan, and core values, focusing on ethical growth, enhanced operational efficiency, and equity-driven outcomes.

The initiative was inspired by insights gained from various AI summits and conferences attended by college leaders. These events highlighted the need for a structured approach to harness the power of generative AI. "This committee is a critical step toward fostering innovation while upholding our commitment to ethical leadership and educational excellence," said Lindstrom. "AI is transforming how we work, learn, and teach, and it's vital that we approach this transformation with intention and purpose."

The committee's first-year goals include developing a CCD-specific AI mission statement, conducting a stakeholder needs assessment, and piloting projects to explore AI's potential. These efforts will be guided by a comprehensive ethics framework and a detailed program plan, ensuring AI's integration aligns with CCD's values.



To ensure diverse input, the committee is seeking volunteers from across the college. Participation does not require prior experience with AI—anyone with an interest in shaping CCD's approach is encouraged to join.

This proactive approach underscores CCD's commitment to innovation and ethical leadership, setting a precedent for how educational institutions can adapt to the evolving technological landscape.



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# Create Education Without Barriers Through Transformational Partners

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## Strengthening Pathways: CCD and MSU Denver Collaborate to Enhance Transfer Success

Community College of Denver (CCD) and Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) are taking significant steps to improve transfer pathways between the two institutions, focusing on seamless student transitions and shared success. These efforts include a joint application for the prestigious Cohort 4 Aspen Transfer Intensive and the planning of an inaugural CCD + MSU Transfer Summit scheduled for February 25, 2025.

As partners, CCD and MSU Denver have applied to join the 2025-26 Aspen-AASCU Transfer Student Success Intensive, a year-long initiative designed to advance transfer practices between community colleges and state universities. Only 10 institution pairs are selected each year to participate in the program, which is generously funded by Ascendium.

The Transfer Intensive offers monthly workshops, expert consulting, and opportunities to craft a Strategic Transfer Excellence Plan (STEP). This plan showcases each team's unique transfer partnership agreement while outlining future reforms to enhance transfer student outcomes. Acceptance into this initiative would be a testament to CCD and MSU Denver's commitment to fostering student success.

"We believe we are strong applicants for this opportunity," said CCD President Dr. Marieleena DeSanctis. "This program represents an exciting step toward aligning our institutions to better support transfer students and improve their journey."



Building on our shared commitment to improving transfer pathways, CCD and MSU Denver are also organizing the first-ever CCD + MSU Transfer Summit. Taking place on February 25, 2025, this summit will bring together leadership, faculty, and staff from both institutions to engage in collaborative action planning.

By pursuing these initiatives, CCD and MSU Denver reaffirm their shared vision to create a more equitable and efficient transfer process. From simplifying credit transfer to improving data sharing and aligning career pathways, this partnership is focused on ensuring every transfer student has the support they need to succeed.

The results of the Aspen Transfer Intensive application will be announced in January, and momentum is already building for the February summit. Together, CCD and MSU Denver are paving the way for a future where transfer students thrive.

Stay tuned for updates as this collaborative effort progresses.

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# Create Education Without Barriers Through Transformational Partners

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## From First-Generation Student to Industry Ambassador: Gael Morales' Inspiring Journey on CityHawk PodTalk

In a recent episode of CityHawk PodTalk, Community College of Denver (CCD) engineering student Gael Morales shared his inspiring journey as a first-generation college student and his involvement with the College Renaissance Corps (CRCorps). As the son of Mexican immigrants who did not complete high school, Gael's story is one of exemplary resilience and a relentless pursuit of education.

Gael discussed his family's influence on his educational aspirations, emphasizing the importance of setting oneself up for success. His participation in CRCorps, a program designed to support community college students in high-demand fields like advanced manufacturing, robotics, and engineering, has been pivotal in his academic and professional development.

CRCorps and CCD partnership, launched in Colorado in May 2024 with support from Serve Colorado, aims to bridge the gap between education and industry by providing students with hands-on experience, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Gael is one of sixteen students selected as Industry Ambassadors, engaging in paid service projects that connect them with industry leaders and enhance their field of study.

Reflecting on his experience, Gael expressed gratitude for the opportunities CRCorps has provided, stating that the program has been instrumental in preparing him for a successful career in engineering.



to hear more about Gael's journey and insights, listen to the full episode on CityHawk PodTalk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHnjo-GqYTo&t=1s>



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# Redefine Our Value Proposition

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## Best in Class, Best in Value

For over 50 years, the Community College of Denver (CCD) has been a pillar of opportunity and excellence in the Mile High City, and our recent recognition as Denver's Best Community College by the readers of The Colorado Sun reaffirms our unwavering commitment to student success and community impact. Since our founding in 1967, CCD has provided accessible, high-quality education to over 11,000 students each year. We proudly deliver an exceptional return on investment, ensuring that every student has the tools, resources, and skills to succeed in their chosen field.

At CCD, we offer a range of certificates, associate degrees, and select bachelor's degrees that prepare students for today's fast-growing careers. From behavioral science, business, education, engineering, healthcare, and legal services to manufacturing and technology, our programs are designed to meet the evolving needs of the workforce. Our ability to swiftly introduce new for-credit and non-credit programs enables us to remain adaptable, responding quickly to evolving workforce demands. Whether students aim to enter competitive job markets or continue their education, our career-focused programs offer hands-on learning experiences and direct pathways to high-paying careers. Through robust partnerships with local employers, our students gain practical experience that enhances both their education and future job prospects.

As a federally recognized Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) for over 20 years, CCD is deeply committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment. We take pride in serving students of all backgrounds, including first-generation college students, veterans, and working professionals. Our diverse student body reflects the rich cultural fabric of Denver,



and we actively break down barriers that have traditionally limited access to higher education. Small class sizes and personalized support from our dedicated faculty further ensure that every student can thrive academically.

For students looking to further their education or re-enter the workforce, CCD offers an incredible return on investment. Our tuition and fees are approximately half the cost than those at our neighboring universities on the Auraria Campus, making CCD one of the most cost-effective options for higher education in the region. While held to the same standards of accreditation as our public universities, CCD offers a high-quality education without the burden of excessive debt. This combination of affordability and academic rigor makes CCD an unparalleled choice for those looking to maximize their educational investment.

CCD's impact goes beyond the classroom. Our graduates are not only equipped with the skills they need to succeed but are also prepared to make meaningful contributions to their communities. Whether it's through healthcare, technology, education, or entrepreneurship, CCD alumni are driving Denver's growth and

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# Redefine Our Value Proposition

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*(Best in Class- continued from page 19)*

innovation. We take pride in knowing that our students—many of whom are the first in their families to attend college—are leading successful careers and making lasting impacts. Learn more about our notable Alumni <https://www.ccd.edu/blog/cityhawk-talk/category/alumni>.

At the heart of CCD is the belief that education is the gateway to opportunity, and that anyone can learn anything. Our mission is not just to educate but to empower every student who walks through our doors. We are committed to breaking down barriers, building bridges to success, and creating futures where every student can thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances. In short, our students' success is our success, and we're honored to play a significant role in shaping the future of Denver.

As we look ahead, CCD remains dedicated to innovation, inclusion, and excellence. We are proud to serve as a beacon of opportunity in our city and will continue to provide an exceptional education at a cost that delivers unmatched value. At CCD, the future is bright—for our students, our city, and beyond, as we continue to lead the way in high-quality education. Learn More at [CCD.edu/about](https://www.ccd.edu/about)



## CCD Practical Nursing Program Earns National Recognition

The Community College of Denver (CCD) is proud to announce that its Practical Nursing program has received accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and a prestigious Certificate of Excellence. This recognition solidifies the program's reputation for delivering high-quality nursing education and preparing students to meet Colorado's growing healthcare demands.



“This accreditation reflects the excellence of our faculty and students, who consistently strive to exceed expectations,” said Dr. Marielena DeSanctis, President of CCD. “Our Practical Nursing program is a vital contributor to Colorado's healthcare workforce and our graduates are exceptionally prepared to make a meaningful impact.”

The ACEN accreditation highlights the program's ability to meet rigorous national standards, ensuring students are equipped with the skills and expertise necessary for successful nursing careers. It also emphasizes the program's focus on aligning educational practices with the evolving needs of the healthcare industry.



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# Redefine Our Value Proposition

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## CCD Dental Hygiene Students Shine at Colorado Mission of Mercy

In September, CCD's dental hygiene students showcased their skills and compassion by volunteering at the Colorado Mission of Mercy (CMOM), a two-day event providing free dental care to those in need. Held annually, CMOM opens its doors to patients of all backgrounds—regardless of employment, citizenship, or insurance status. This year, nearly 800 patients received vital dental care, thanks to the passion of volunteers like CCD's students.

At the event, patients underwent thorough assessments and evaluations before receiving necessary treatments. From cleanings and extractions to education on oral hygiene, the care provided was life-changing for many. CMOM has served as a beacon of hope since its inception in 2007, treating over 19,000 patients and delivering an astounding \$17 million in donated dental care.

CCD dental hygiene students played a key role in this effort, demonstrating both technical expertise and a tenacity for service. Their presence not only provided immediate support to patients but also underscored the college's focus on preparing students to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Rebecca McGruder, a CCD dental hygiene instructor, expressed her pride in the students: "It is truly inspiring to know CCD's dental hygiene students' future patients will be in great hands."

By volunteering their time and skills, these students exemplify the spirit of care and professionalism that defines the dental hygiene program at CCD. Their participation in events like CMOM reinforces their readiness to excel in their future careers while making a tangible impact on the lives of others.

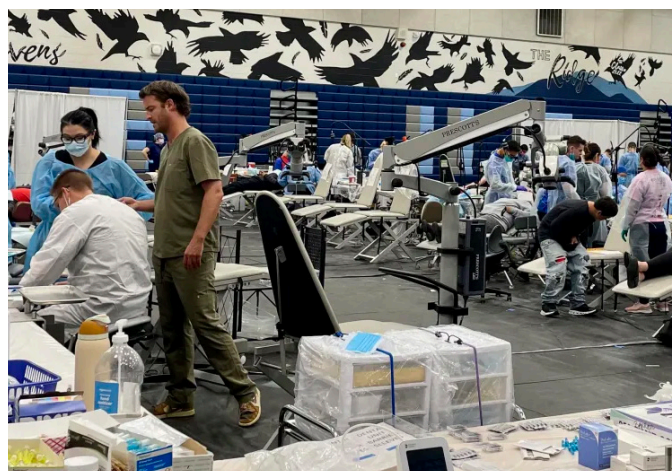


As the next generation of dental professionals, CCD's students are proving that their determination extends far beyond the classroom, setting a standard of excellence that reflects positively on the college and the wider community.

### About CMOM

CMOM is a volunteer-driven event that has become a cornerstone of dental care access in Colorado. Welcoming everyone who needs treatment, the event continues to bridge gaps in healthcare while fostering a spirit of service and generosity among its volunteers.

For more information about CCD's Dental Hygiene program and how it prepares students for impactful careers, visit [ccd.edu/dental](https://ccd.edu/dental).



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# Redefine Our Value Proposition

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## CCD Recognized as a 2024 ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for College Student Voting

Community College of Denver (CCD) has earned recognition as a 2024 ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for College Student Voting, placing it among an esteemed group of 471 colleges and universities nationwide. This honor reflects CCD's active role in fostering student participation in the democratic process and building a culture of civic engagement.



The designation celebrates CCD's successful participation in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, the development of a 2024 democratic engagement action plan, and its efforts to share campus voting data through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).

"The research is clear: colleges and universities that make intentional efforts to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement have higher campus voter registration and voter turnout rates. This year we saw more colleges than ever before step up their efforts to ensure that their students were registered and ready to make their voices heard at the ballot box," said Jennifer Domagal-Goldman, Executive Director of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

"These Most Engaged Campuses are setting the standard for nonpartisan civic engagement work for colleges and universities across the country."

This recognition aligns with CCD's efforts to support students during the 2024 election season. On November 6 and 7, CCD hosted Post-Election Peace Spaces in the Tivoli Student Union, offering a tranquil environment for students to relax and reflect.

The spaces featured calming activities such as crafting, coloring, and soothing music, alongside giveaways and light refreshments. Tammi Spicer-Dormuth, Associate Professor at CCD, shared, "We wanted to create a welcoming space for students, faculty, and staff to take a collective deep breath, reflect on what we had all just lived through, and focus our energies on rebuilding trust within our community. The days after an election are crucial for community-building, especially during times of deep division, and these Peace Spaces give us an opportunity to prioritize a collective path forward."

Through initiatives like these, CCD strengthens the connection between civic participation and student well-being. For more information on CCD's civic engagement programs, visit [ccd.edu/ccd-votes](https://ccd.edu/ccd-votes).





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# Redefine Our Value Proposition

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## CCD Students Receive Tools from the Gene Haas Foundation

Three proud CityHawks from the Community College of Denver (CCD) have been awarded essential tools to support their studies in machining, thanks to the generosity of the Gene Haas Foundation. These students, pictured with their new equipment, are among four recipients selected this semester as part of a grant-funded initiative to empower future machinists.



The students each received digital calipers, safety glasses, and a USB drive, tools critical for honing their skills in CCD's Machine Technologies program at the Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC). These tools not only enhance their hands-on learning but also prepare them for success in the rapidly evolving field of machining.

Alex Hardie, Adjunct Instructor in Machine Technologies, shared his enthusiasm for the students' achievement: "They each received digital calipers, safety glasses and a USB drive and they were very, very thankful and excited for this! We are giving students tools who are in their second semester of machining classes

and in good academic standing after census date."

The support from the Gene Haas Foundation highlights the importance of equipping students with the resources they need to thrive academically and professionally. These tools will enable recipients to deepen their technical knowledge and excel in their coursework.

CCD extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Gene Haas Foundation for their continued support of the college and its students. Partnerships like this are vital in preparing the next generation of skilled professionals and fostering growth in high-demand industries.

Congratulations to the student recipients for their hard work and dedication to excellence in machining. Their accomplishments reflect the bright future of CCD's Machine Technologies program and the broader manufacturing sector.

For more information on CCD's Machine Technologies program and opportunities like this, visit [ccd.edu/machining](https://ccd.edu/machining).