



METROPOLITAN
STATE UNIVERSITYSM
OF DENVER

Reimagine **possible**

MSU DENVER

2030 Strategic Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“MSU Denver becomes even more important in connecting diverse populations to the entire experience of higher education through our Strategic Plan and five pillars, so our students can find how they can be bigger than themselves.”

– Russell Noles
Vice Chair,
Board of Trustees
MSU Denver

INTRODUCTION

Roadrunners are not like other birds. A roadrunner flies only when necessary, readily embraces humans and, as a desert-dweller, knows how to live in difficult conditions. Among Indigenous communities of the American Southwest, roadrunners are revered for their courage, strength, speed and endurance. And, much like the roadrunner etched in animated pop-culture history, they are not to be underestimated.

While the Roadrunner moniker was born from the experience of “Metro State” students bravely racing across a busy Denver thoroughfare to campus, in many ways Metropolitan State University of Denver students are a reflection of their feathered mascot. Some are forced by circumstance to work harder than their peers, being agile and adaptive to thrive while navigating difficult life terrain. Others are working to make a midlife career change, are traditional students attending a university for the first time or are new Americans striving to reap the benefits of higher education.

Over the years, the MSU Denver Roadrunner has come to signify even more, including these five characteristics shared by every graduate of the University, known as the Roadrunner Difference.



**Roadrunners are energetic,
take flight when the time is right
and are not to be underestimated.**

DIVERSE

They come from every background imaginable and learn to be broad-minded by grappling with a variety of experiences and viewpoints.

TENACIOUS

They are determined to succeed and achieve. If they get knocked down, they get back up.

PRIMED

They have career-ready skills and a deep knowledge of the issues and dynamics that shape the workforce.

PURPOSEFUL

They want to use their education to make change. Every degree earned has a ripple effect, spreading benefits across the Denver metro area and beyond.

ENTREPRENEURIAL

They don't settle for walking on well-worn trails. They reimagine what is possible for themselves and their communities.

As the profile of higher education evolves under increasingly difficult financial constraints exacerbated by a global pandemic that is rapidly fueling national and global uncertainties, MSU Denver has persevered through 2020 and is showing its Roadrunner strength. The University is always reimagining what's possible, and its unique educational model is poised to become the future of higher education as families seek high quality, flexibility and affordability amid changing times. MSU Denver's 2030 comprehensive strategic-planning process was set against a backdrop of not only massive upheaval across the higher-education landscape but a movement for racial equity that informed its decision-making and renewed its commitment to educational equity.

MSU Denver recognizes that its campus sits upon the ancestral homelands of the Tsitsistas "Cheyennes" and Hinónóéí "Arapahos." The establishment of the Auraria Campus also displaced 1960s residents of the Auraria neighborhood, a predominantly working-class Latino population. The University recognizes these families and has offered a free college education for those displaced, along with their children and their grandchildren. This understanding drives the intentionality behind MSU Denver's efforts to welcome students and employees from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Stopping and examining its history in regard to race and racism and identifying its anti-racist aspirations during the spring and summer of 2020's racial unrest allowed for MSU Denver to build on its foundation of equity and set an ambitious course for increasing diversity and equity at all levels of the University. An increased demand for a diverse workforce will further enhance MSU Denver's position in the Colorado career pipeline.

In so many ways, MSU Denver is well-positioned to thrive under difficult circumstances. The University is known throughout the state as being immensely efficient with its staff and operations and for innovating despite limited resources. The University has proved it can survive and thrive, like the roadrunner, under these extreme conditions. Over the course of the next 10 years, MSU Denver intends to amplify national awareness of its signature educational experience of meeting students where they are, while enhancing its role of providing affordable and transformative undergraduate and graduate education for any student in pursuit of the American dream.

As MSU Denver launches its 2030 comprehensive Strategic Plan, it is – as always – ready to rise.

THE APPROACH

MSU Denver’s 2030 Strategic Plan is the culmination of 18 months of work by faculty, staff, administrators, students, board members, alumni and University leadership around one overarching theme: how to reveal the promise and reality of the Roadrunner spirit as this leading public, urban University asserts its value to Colorado and further raises its profile in the nation. Creating a strategic plan is a process, an exchange of ideas and a way for key constituencies to send a clear message that MSU Denver is delivering what its students want and need to be successful.



“At MSU Denver, we not only empower, but we help students tap into their own power, often in spaces they could not before.”

– Marissa Molina | Trustee, Board of Trustees, MSU Denver

Covid-19 interrupted campus operations, life in Colorado and, of course, the strategic-planning process – but it did not stop us. In fact, the process continued with a new urgency, showcasing Roadrunner resiliency under the most trying of circumstances. That process was built upon the vision of the MSU Denver Board of Trustees and President Janine Davidson, Ph.D., and led by co-chairs Cathy Lucas, vice president of Strategy and External Affairs, and Matt Makley, Ph.D., professor of history and former president of the Faculty Senate. The process was inclusive and comprehensive – an acknowledgment of MSU Denver’s mission and how it can build upon strengths to become a greater force in Colorado while also sharing in the state’s successes.

Collaborative Strategic Planning Process



MSU Denver’s 2030 Strategic Plan serves as a guiding framework for decision-making and provides clear direction for the future of the University to drive success, sustainability and excellence. MSU Denver’s vision is a natural extension of what it does best to educate and meet each student where they are in life.

VISION STATEMENT

We are a nationally recognized leader for social mobility – where students of all ages and backgrounds build a better, more equitable Colorado through innovative and transformative education.

A strong vision statement anchors every successful strategic plan. By its nature, a vision statement is aspirational, serving to propel an organization toward a higher ideal. For MSU Denver, it is also an acknowledgment of what the University does every day to impact the lives of all Coloradans. MSU Denver recognizes what it does well and, with this vision statement, seeks to define its unique place in the higher-education landscape in Colorado, while also setting a nationally recognized standard of excellence.

As MSU Denver works through this 2030 Strategic Plan, builds upon its strengths, achieves its goals and continues to implement day-to-day operations, it strives to be recognized as a university that gets it right but remains grounded in its utility to the economy of Colorado.



“MSU Denver enriches Colorado’s society and economy. As we continue to excel, we will show our state and the nation how to educate students of the future by meeting them where they are and providing a learning experience that caters to their unique needs.”

– Janine Davidson, Ph.D.
President MSU Denver

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, postgraduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global and technological society. To fulfill its mission, our diverse University community engages the greater Denver community in scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge.

A STRATEGIC PLAN

The process established to develop the 2030 comprehensive Strategic Plan was appropriate for our unique University community, earnest and genuinely inclusive. The resulting plan provides a road map for us to fulfill an ambitious vision, allowing our vibrant, inclusive and engaged Roadrunner community to build on its passion and commitment to the MSU Denver mission and invest in the next chapter of its success.

“Your success is dependent on everyone rowing in the same direction because they’re morally invested. We will power this economy by taking people at every age and preparing them to get a job; the resources will follow.”

- Dan Baer, Ph.D.
Former Executive Director
Colorado Department of Higher Education

NUMBERS AT-A-GLANCE

1,900

Thoughts, Ideas and Feedback Gathered
(from students, faculty, staff, alumni, community and business leaders)

426

Community Members Engaged
(includes Foundation Board, Community Cabinet and Board of Trustees)

500

Faculty and Staff

50

Campus Groups

10

Town Halls

750

Hours

52

Meetings

5

Imperatives

5

Pillars

1

**Team
Mission
Vision
MSU Denver**

“MSU Denver is Colorado’s go-to mobility generator. Wherever one of our citizens starts, this University will help them to advance their lives and their communities and therefore contribute to the state’s future prosperity.”

- Kristin Hultquist
Founding Partner, HCM Strategists
MSU Denver Board of Trustees

The planning process was a grassroots effort rather than a top-down mandate. For MSU Denver to maintain its unique identity, the University intends to coordinate the implementation of the themes of 2030 Strategic Plan with faculty by infusing it into the curriculum for it to take hold. As with everything at MSU Denver, all plans, goals and strategies are rooted in putting students first and making it possible for them to achieve their dreams.

MSU DENVER CORE VALUES

MSU DENVER CORE VALUES
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COMMUNITY

MSU Denver's mission, vision, ongoing operations and strategic planning are informed by a core set of values that define who we are – and aspire to be – as a university. They are: Community, Access, Diversity, Respect and Excellence.

MSU Denver is an engaged urban university that promotes mutual relationships between the University and the community, where we apply the intellectual strength of our faculty and the energy of our students to solve real-world problems. We benefit the economic health, cultural health and well-being of the community and promote the public good through the transformation of urban communities in metropolitan Denver.

ACCESS

Inspired by the students we serve, many of whom are low-income or first-generation, our self-confident academic community breaks down traditional boundaries and takes responsibility for meeting the challenges of access to education in the 21st century.

DIVERSITY

MSU Denver has been committed to diversity, equity and inclusive excellence since its inception. This is evidenced by our efforts to embed systemic practices to achieve a high-quality, culturally sensitive education; is reflected by our leadership, faculty, staff and students; and is woven into the fabric of our University.

RESPECT

We boldly seek a climate of mutual respect and reflection that supports different beliefs and perspectives and promotes the open exchange of ideas. Because we respect everyone, communicate effectively, promote transparency, embrace dialogue, cultivate trust and respect governance structures, we are consistently able to make decisions with a students-first mentality.

EXCELLENCE

MSU Denver faculty members are known for their commitment to excellence in student-centered teaching and scholarship. Staff members are dedicated to the delivery of high-quality wraparound services for all students. Roadrunners strive for excellence in all they do, embracing the challenges in front of them and rising to reach their full potential.

PILLAR I: STUDENT ACCESS, SERVICE AND ACHIEVEMENT



“Our students are from Colorado, and our graduates stay in Colorado. We have a strong connection with issues related to all of the diverse populations within the state. We really serve their needs in specific areas where they’re not being provided opportunities currently. We give them advice and a chance to learn and grow into leaders.”

– **Matt Griswold, Ed.D.**
Associate Vice President, Online Learning
MSU Denver

MSU Denver attracts, develops, credentials and graduates tenacious students who realize their goals and craft their futures. Regardless of where they have been, we meet them where they are and launch them to where they want to go. Through an affordable, flexible and holistic education, we help students build essential skills grounded in a multicultural and global perspective that lead to graduation, followed by career and life success.

GOALS

1

Attract, prepare and graduate students equipped to succeed in the 21st century.

MSU Denver will provide a seamless and affordable undergraduate and graduate student experience from recruitment to degree completion where all students will have the opportunity to research, work and serve in the broader community, through robust service-learning, internships and undergraduate research programs.

2

Be Colorado’s solution for closing the educational-attainment gap.

MSU Denver will increase postsecondary credential attainment by working with K-12 schools, community colleges and other strategic partners to expand access to financial aid and create a responsive educational experience for Colorado’s diverse students, leading to careers that are critical to the state’s economic vitality and workforce needs.

3

Provide an ideal transfer experience for students.

MSU Denver will be known as Colorado’s best institution for ease of transfer, both in and out, through a flexible curriculum and welcoming environment that provides supportive policies, programs and processes to support the unique needs of transfer students.

PILLAR II: STUDENT-CENTERED ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

“MSU Denver provides an incredibly high-quality academic experience and education and is on par with and in many ways exceeds other competitors in the marketplace.”

– Lorii Rabinowitz
CEO
Denver Scholarship Foundation

MSU Denver has a richly talented faculty of teacher-scholars. We deliver a relevant, rigorous and innovative academic experience. We empower our faculty to support our diverse students in growing as scholars, becoming leaders in their fields and succeeding in their personal, professional and civic lives.

GOALS

1

Produce rigorous and enriching learning experiences tailored to meet students where they are.

MSU Denver will further develop and maintain effective curriculum processes that empower faculty to create new and innovative courses, certifications, micro-credentials, badges and other flexible “on- and off-ramps,” while also continuing to enhance learning spaces on campus.

2

Build upon our distinct academic experience while providing the Roadrunner Difference.

MSU Denver will connect undergraduate and graduate students to industry and civic leaders both locally and globally; grow our experiential and service-learning opportunities; and encourage and recognize collaboration and cross-disciplinarity to ensure that students receive a well-balanced, holistic and relevant education.

PILLAR III: CIVIC AND ECONOMIC CATALYST



“It’s about providing opportunities for students to critically engage in self-reflection with their communities in a very different way.”

– Katherine Martinez, Ph.D.
Director, Gender Institute for Teaching and Advocacy
MSU Denver

MSU Denver activates the talents and passions of our students, alumni, faculty and staff. As an anchor institution with a vibrant urban campus, we serve as a civic, economic and talent-rich catalyst to meet the opportunities and challenges facing Colorado and its diverse communities.

GOALS

1

Be the indispensable and agile provider of talent and skill that drives Colorado’s economy.

MSU Denver will create a pipeline of high-impact career-related experiences for students, leveraging alumni and industry partnerships while embracing economic-impact opportunities throughout Colorado.

2

Be the convener for problem-solving and forecasting community needs through civic discourse.

MSU Denver will be the community’s go-to resource for problem-solving by leveraging our expertise, inclusive community and welcoming physical space to address the most pressing issues of our day, while also creating a culture that values civic leadership and drives social change.

3

Enrich the greater Denver community through lifelong learning and engagement.

MSU Denver will elevate its role as an anchor institution by supporting excellent programs in the arts, athletics and culture that will enrich the community and build broad, diverse connections and relationships with external stakeholders.

PILLAR IV: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

“MSU Denver has a welcoming nature for those who may have been disenfranchised traditionally in these spaces. There’s a welcome mat that is sort of rolled out for folks, and there’s a language that the University is comfortable speaking that engages with people. When I was a student, I’d be sitting next to someone who just got out of high school or a person who was on their third career choice in their 50s.”

– Bobby LeFebre
Colorado Poet Laureate
2004 MSU Denver Alumnus

MSU Denver embodies diversity in all its rich representations and expressions. It is who we are. We commit ourselves to justice that provides a foundation for equity and inclusion. We mend internal and external inequities through the cultivation of a vibrant, healthy community.

GOALS

1

Cultivate and sustain a culture of inclusive and intersectional teaching, learning and practice.

MSU Denver will be a model for shared leadership that fosters an anti-racism environment and systemic transformation through a more representative workplace that attracts and retains diverse faculty and staff, while investing in DEI service, scholarship and practice.

2

Be an agent of healing by helping to convene and celebrate Denver’s diverse communities.

MSU Denver will be known in Colorado as a connection point for people from diverse backgrounds and experiences that supports the respectful exchange of ideas and holds space for the collaborative work of advancing equity and inclusion in the state.

3

Become a model Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) for higher education.

MSU Denver will be a national leader for serving Latinx students by creating and sustaining initiatives that support students as they achieve their academic goals and prepare for their careers.

PILLAR V: ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



“I want to be funded by the state equitably and create the financial means to do more of what we’re doing. Our faculty are some of the finest people I have ever known or worked with. We have a prizewinning faculty. They could pick where they want to teach. You know why they teach at MSU Denver? Because of the students we serve. It feeds their soul. It doesn’t just feed their pocketbook.”

– **Barbara Grogan**
Chair, Board of Trustees
MSU Denver

MSU Denver achieves agility by investing in our human talent. We improve our physical infrastructure with an eye toward environmentally sustainable practices, and we work together to create a culture of continuous process improvement. We accomplish sustainability by expanding revenue streams that diversify and grow our academic offerings, student success, endowment and partnerships to benefit our community.

GOALS

1

Be Colorado’s most desired place of employment.

MSU Denver will continue to improve compensation, benefits, professional development and our infrastructure backbone, while becoming a more representative workplace and enhancing our inclusive leadership environment – allowing leaders to lead from all levels of the University.

2

Diversify and grow the University’s revenue streams for long-term sustainability.

MSU Denver will design and implement a comprehensive fundraising campaign, increase our endowed funds, examine our business model for new ways to grow revenue and work with a broad coalition of stakeholders to radically reform the state’s investment in public higher education and the diverse students the University serves.

3

Champion the reinvestment and development of the Auraria Campus.

MSU Denver will collaborate with its partners on the Auraria Campus to explore partnerships that ensure we remain contemporary and relevant through new construction and renovation to maximize enrollment and retention and better support academic programs.



MOVING FORWARD

Five imperatives that will drive this plan:

- Remain committed to providing a rigorous and enriching university education.
- Foster an anti-racism and inclusive environment.
- Design a sustainable business model that allows MSU Denver to grow and thrive.
- Continue to build MSU Denver's reputation and brand.
- Demonstrate responsiveness through agility, flexibility and tenacity.

Progress on each pillar and goal will need to be evaluated and measured regularly to mark successes along the way and course-correct, as needed. From the President's Office to the classroom – virtual or in person – MSU Denver's community must fully invest and commit for the plan to succeed. If properly resourced, this comprehensive Strategic Plan has the potential to lift MSU Denver into a higher orbit. The Roadrunner spirit has carried the University for nearly six decades, preparing a well-educated workforce for Colorado. Now is the time for MSU Denver to reach its full potential. Through innovative and transformative education, the University will prepare each person who enrolls to pursue their dreams of greater social and economic mobility while also building a more equitable Colorado. We are the future of higher education. And the future is now. Together, Roadrunners rise.





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