

Student Services Review Request for Information (RFI) FY 2024-25

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February 10, 2025**

Center for Access and Campus Engagement

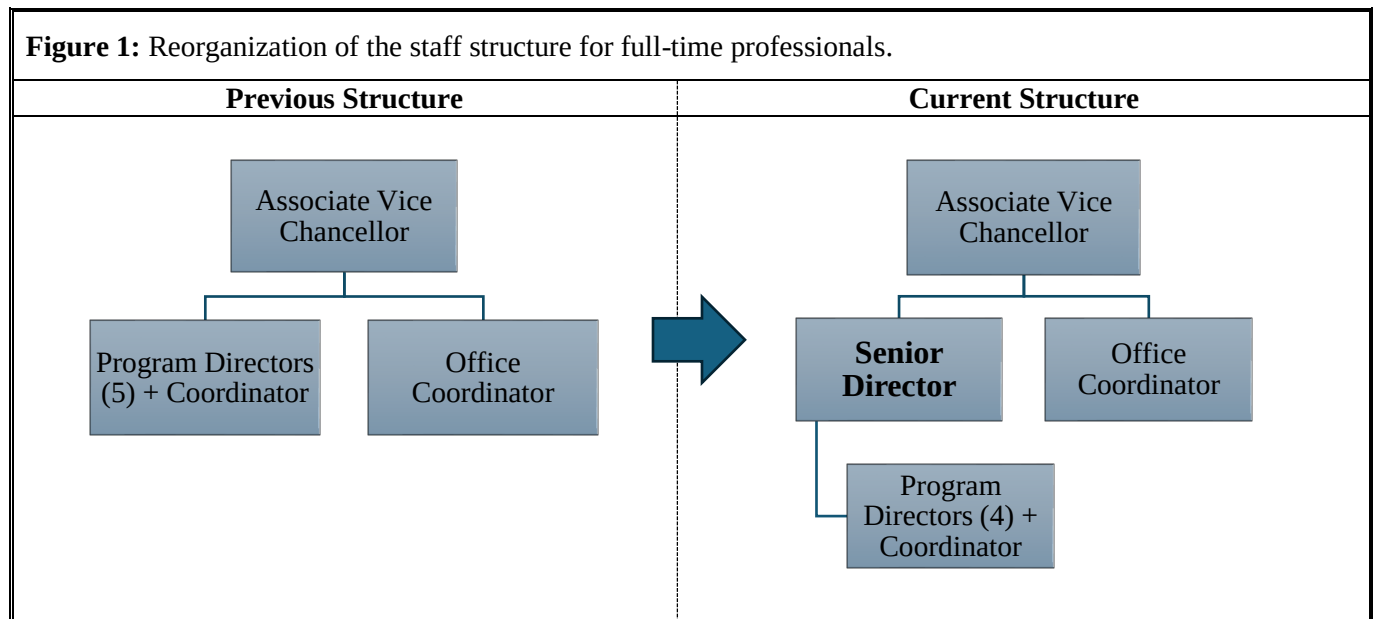
The Student Services Review Committee's (SSRC) mission is to advocate for the student experience at the University of Colorado Denver. The SSRC's priorities lie in ensuring equitable access to student resources, attention to historically marginalized groups, and providing feedback to improve student fee funded resources. Overall, the SSRC exists and is responsible for ensuring that student services and student fees are being used in a manner that best serves the students of CU Denver.

Please complete the following request for information:

1) Overview of Unit

- Please provide your unit's name, offices that comprise the unit, what services are provided, and the mission statement.
- Concerning the mission statement, can you briefly talk about what your priority is for all of your areas this year?

In Spring 2024, the Center for Access and Campus Engagement (formerly Center for Identity and Inclusion) conducted an internal program evaluation to identify areas of growth and improvement, which included a budget review and identifying ways to better allocate resources. As a part of this work, the Center for Access and Campus Engagement (CACE) reorganized the structure for full-time professionals during the Summer and Fall 2024 terms, and developed a Senior Director position to lead the team responsible for implementing programs designed to increase educational opportunities for traditionally underserved students. Figure 1 below shows the changes to the staff structure that occurred last year.



Since Summer 2024, Antonio Farias, Vice Chancellor for Access and Campus Engagement has been rethinking the structure of the Office for Access and Campus Engagement (Formerly Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) to align

with the incoming Chancellor who is clear on centering students in all aspects of the university’s operations. Within the reorganization plan, the primary objective was to revise existing staff positions to support the future trajectory of diversity initiatives while maintaining the integrity of this critical work. Therefore, under Antonio’s leadership, CACE began to fast track elements of their reorganization plan to include a new vision and mission for Spring 2025:

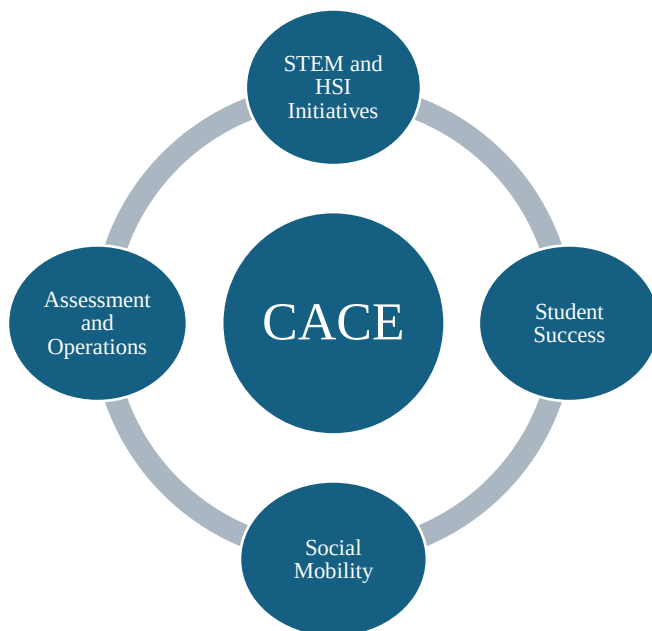
What we do (Vision): The CACE aims to address the opportunity gaps in higher education by implementing research-based programs and high-impact practices designed to increase the educational success for all students at the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver).

Who we are (Mission): The CACE creates learning environments that actively engage and empower students by offering support and resources that enhance their educational experience at CU Denver.

- Access is understood as providing educational opportunities that lead to greater enrollment and graduation rates among college students.
- Campus Engagement is understood as staff, faculty, and administrators collaborating to create a supportive learning environment for all students grounded in servant principles.

Based on Vijay Pendakur’s (2016) research on strategies for retention and student success, CACE has begun to transition from “identity-centered” to “**identity-conscious**” pedagogy and practice. By adopting an “identity-conscious” approach to diversity work, this will allow CACE to become more focused on educational outcomes while continuing to design and implement programs with student identities in mind. The outcomes of focus will be grounded in student persistence, enrollment, and graduation metrics. Moreover, the names and scope of each race-based program (e.g., Asian American Student Services) will be changed to support the shift to “identity-conscious” pedagogy and practice. Figure 2 below outlines the new programming areas:

Figure 2: New programming areas for CACE.



While CACE resources and programs remain open to all students regardless of their identities, focused support for traditionally underserved populations will continue, but how we approach this work will change using “identity-conscious” pedagogy and practice. Under CACE’s new vision and mission, underserved students are:

- First-generation
- Limited-income
- Underrepresented groups in STEM
- Tribal affiliation
- Women
- Caregivers
- Students that qualify for ASSET

Cultural programming will continue, but the responsibility for organizing these activities will be transitioned to CACE student leaders. Under the advisement of Program Directors, students will be employed through CACE and will receive training to serve as peer mentors and to plan events and workshops that foster learning, understanding, and dialogue across cultural boundaries.

2) Accomplishments

- Please describe efforts, events, or accomplishments that your units are proud of from the 23-24 fiscal year.
- Please include at least one accomplishment from each office/program that reports to you.

Table 1 outlines the selected accomplishments from the previous fiscal year (i.e., FY 2023-24) that demonstrates our unique contributions to support the university in its mission to “Make Education Work for All.”

Table 1: FY 2023-24 selected accomplishments for CACE.				
	Initiative	Budget Narrative	Impact	Program(s)/Office(s)
1	Nelson-Running Wolf Scholarship Program	In Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, a total of \$32,000 in scholarship money was awarded to currently enrolled CU Denver students with tribal affiliation and demonstrated service to their community. All awardees maintained a minimum 2.0 GPA.	17 students in total received a scholarship (\$500-\$1,300/semester) to attend CU Denver. 94% semester-to-semester retention rate for all scholarship recipients.	American Indian Student Services (Lead) in partnership with Financial Aid & Scholarships Office and Bursar’s Office.
2	Colorado Dragon Boat Festival	In Spring 2024, a total of \$1,545 was committed to assist CU Denver students with their registration fee for the Summer 2024 Dragon Boat races at Sloan’s Lake Park.	24 students in total competed in the Dragon Boat races. Students were also immersed in Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander culture.	Asian American Student Services (Lead) and Alumni Office.
3	Caring for Caregivers Pilot Initiative	In Fall 2023, an internal survey was launched to identify and foster a community of caregiving students. In Spring 2024, services for caregiving students were expanded with virtual meetups, increased access to the food pantry, and micro-grant (up to \$450/student) awards.	223 students in total were identified as caregivers. 15 of those students applied for a micro-grant and 9 applicants were selected to receive a stipend.	Women & Gender Student Services (Lead), CU President’s Inclusive Grant, and Student Wellness Center.
4	Closing the Opportunity Gap for Underrepresented groups in STEM	In Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, a total of \$10,000 was committed to cosponsor travel for student members from the National Society of Black Engineers and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers.	19 students in total received funding to attend both local and national conferences to network, and interview for internships and jobs in their respective fields.	Black Student Services and Latinx Student Services (Leads) in partnership with College of Engineering, Design and Computing.

In addition, throughout FY 2023-24, time and resources were devoted to coordinate events and programs with different student organizations and campus partners to celebrate and acknowledge the cultural identities of our diverse student body. Table 2 lists that total number of student participants for each designated month.

Table 2: FY 2023-24 student participation data for heritage or history month events.		
Heritage or History Month	Total # of Events	Total Participants
Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month	8	297
Black History Month	3	200
Hispanic Heritage Month	7	827
Native Heritage Month	5	132
Women's History Month	5	191
TOTAL	28	1,647

3) Accessibility and Inclusion

- Please describe how the programs/office in your unit supports historically underserved and marginalized students through its services (Underserved students and marginalized students include: BIPOC, first-generation, students with disabilities, and non-traditional students):
- How are you meeting students' needs and identifying gaps in services?

As CACE transitions from “identity-centered” to “**identity-conscious**” pedagogy and practice, the most commonly held identities that are important to CU Denver students (e.g., race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on) will continue to be critical to our work as educators. However, through an intersectional perspective (i.e., understanding how systems of oppression create unique experiences for individuals and communities), our goal is to broaden the dimensions of diversity by intentionally including a range of student experiences as defined as “traditionally underserved student populations.” Under CACE’s new vision and mission, underserved students are:

- First-generation: A student that is first in their family to attend college.
- Limited-income: A student who requires substantial financial assistance to attend college.
- Underrepresented groups in STEM: A student who identifies as a woman and/or from underrepresented racial groups that desire to pursue a career in science, technology, engineering, or math.
- Tribal affiliation: A student who is a member or enrolled with a federally recognized tribe.
- Women: An adult who lives and identifies as a women.
- Caregivers: A student who provides care for a child, family member, or partner.
- Students that qualify for ASSET: An undocumented student who is eligible for Colorado in-state tuition.

As we consider the needs of traditionally underserved student populations, our movement towards “identity-conscious” pedagogy and practice will challenge us to reconsider the metrics we have used in the past as CACE focuses on student educational outcomes (e.g., yearly persistence, reducing student debt, engagement in high-impact practices, timely graduation, and so on).

4) Measuring Impact

- Please provide student feedback that demonstrates how the offices/programs in your unit are positively impacting the student experience at CU Denver. This can include charts, graphs, tables, and/or anecdotal information.
- ***Please include an attached budgetary spread of operating speedtypes.*** Excel spreadsheets are preferred. Any additional notes or commentary on budgetary items will be helpful to the process and give greater context to our senate/student body.
- How have budget reallocations and/or cuts impacted your area(s) under your purview?
- How are your programs/units measuring impact? Here are examples of items you can share to demonstrate reporting impact:
 - Do you send out surveys?
 - Do students check-in for your events?
 - Do you have a post-evaluation tool after programs?

- Do you track the number of students you serve per semester?

The following is a short list of student feedback collected in FY 2023-24 that demonstrates the impact of our unique contributions on the student experience at CU Denver.

- “CII housed my cultural reawakening through student organizations such as ASA and VSA, and programming such as ASLP. These enhanced my sense of belonging and inclusion on campus because they created spaces where my presence was being accounted for, where I felt I had a social responsibility to upkeep.” – A student mentor
- “Our family's financial situation has been intricate since migrating from Colombia. Starting afresh in a new country meant leaving behind all our assets, which posed a significant challenge to our financial stability and prosperity... I am reliant on scholarships to pursue my academic aspirations, as my parents have expressed their inability to fund my education. Securing this scholarship is paramount for me to pursue my dreams despite our challenging circumstances.” – A recipient of a student scholarship
- “Transitioning from Community College of Denver to the University of Colorado Denver was a significant change... These services [Native American Student Services] not only helped me feel understood on campus but also played a pivotal role in my academic journey. They provided a sense of community and connection to my roots, which was especially important as a former foster care alum trying to navigate higher education. Having these resources available is crucial for students like me, who seek understanding, representation.” – A transfer student
- “I really loved the laid-back feel of the summit and the awesome workshops I was able to attend. Thank you so much for pulling together some really interesting speakers and facilitators. You could feel the connections in the room.” – A participant of the Women and Gender Equity Leadership Summit
- “During the [Engineering] convention, I was fortunate enough to land two interviews and received internship offers from both companies. I am currently preparing for the internship I chose at Trane Technologies this summer. I look forward to the possibility of coming to next year's convention where I will look for full time positions after my graduation.” – A member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers

Table 3 includes all of the student-fee funded speedtypes that are under CACE. Each speedtype directly funds student events (e.g., graduation ceremonies and cultural events), student travel and professional development workshops, student positions, and materials required to support events and workshops. Please note that CACE **does not** use student-fees to support or fund events that are designed for “prospective students” or students that are not currently enrolled in courses at CU Denver. It is our priority to do our best to maintain the integrity and purpose of student-fee funded programs by serving currently enrolled CU Denver students that pay into student fees.

Table 3: FY 2023-24 budgets for CACE student-fee funded programs.		
Speedtype	Description	Continuing Annual Budget
*62000152	Women’s Resource Center	\$98,054
62022045	American Indian Activities	\$22,203
62022046	Hispanic Activities	\$22,203
62022047	Black Student Activities	\$22,203
62022048	Asian American Activities	\$22,203
62076916	Diversity & Cultural Programming	\$38,362
TOTAL		\$225,228
*Speedtype 62000152 includes partial salary and benefits for a Program Director position.		

The Office for Access and Campus Engagement did experience a 2.6% permanent budget reduction at the start of FY 2024-25 (i.e., July 1, 2024). However, the budget reduction did not impact student-fee funded programs whatsoever and the continuing annual budgets for the above speedtypes remained untouched and intact.

The CACE values assessment because we acknowledge that it is important to measure the impact of our efforts on the student experience at CU Denver, which includes how the students we serve are progressing towards their educational goals through persistence, retention, and graduation rates. Moreover, no program or office is perfect and the needs of students are constantly evolving, therefore, it is important to build and maintain a culture of improvement through assessment. The following are examples of the measurement tools CACE will continue to utilize to gather this important data:

- Check-in forms at events and programs to gather student information/count.
- Combined efforts of print and digital forms of surveys to gather pre- and post- data.
- Real-time polls during events, programs, and workshops to track progress and engagement.
- Brainstorming sessions through organized focused groups with student leaders and campus partners.
- National data and campus-wide surveys (e.g., National College Health Assessment and Campus and Workplace Culture Survey).
- Academic information (e.g., major and GPA) gathered through Civitas and 1-to-1 mentoring meetings.
- Needs assessments for both students and professional staff members.
- Journal publications on best practices for college access and student success.
- Utilization of local software (e.g., Student Life's MyLynx) to track student participation and to promote events.

5) Future Goals

- Please describe how your unit acts in support of Goal 1 in the CU Denver 2030 Strategic Plan regarding equitable access to student fee funded resources. Also include your future goals within the next 3-5 years.
- Where does your unit align with the university goals and student needs/expectations?

The following goals will steer CACE as they embark on a transformative journey to support CU Denver's mission to "Make Education Work for All":

- 1) Increase the enrollment and graduation rates among traditionally underserved populations by adopting identity-conscious pedagogy and practices that focus on student retention and success.
- 2) Foster student engagement by creating inclusive learning environments for all CU Denver students through collaboration with staff, faculty, and administrators.
- 3) Empower students by offering comprehensive training and employment opportunities that will equip them with the skills and confidence necessary to be leaders and mentors in their respective fields of study.

Reference

Pendakur, V. (Ed.). (2016). *Closing the opportunity gap: Identity-conscious strategies for retention and student success*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Final Remarks

We want to thank all of you for your commitment to uplifting the student voice and prioritizing shared governance at our university! This information is essential to the CU Student Government Association's mission of continuously improving the student experience and supporting the ongoing initiatives of each unit. Our platform this year is "Creating Connections & Community." We see this process fostering a greater connection between students, staff, and faculty; while simultaneously growing the CU community.

- SGA Executive Team