



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

COLORADO WOMEN'S COLLEGE

Colorado Women's College Strategic Plan 2017-2020: Innovations for Advancing Women

Context/Overview

The University of Denver's Colorado Women's College (CWC) historical mission – to educate women to boldly lead in the communities where they live, work and engage – is as relevant today as ever. The college has persevered through many iterations in its 126-year history, a hallmark of CWC's resiliency and the power of its mission. CWC has been intentional in creating a learning environment that is distinctive, inclusive, and rooted in a sense of community. This community, which has most recently served nontraditional and diverse female students so well, is perfectly suited to impact the 21st century woman who seeks, and most likely will demand, an environment and overarching culture that embraces her as a whole person with intellectual interests, passions, needs, and ambitions beyond the classroom and campus.

In February 2015, DU's Board of Trustees made a difficult but courageous decision that Colorado Women's College in its current form was no longer viable as a freestanding, degree-granting academic unit. The Board challenged University leaders to think boldly about new, innovative and relevant ways in which CWC could achieve its legacy and mission of advancing women and creating gender equity through education, research, and action. Concurrent to this decision, the University under the direction of Chancellor Rebecca Chopp and Provost Gregg Kvistad embarked on an ambitious strategic plan articulated in DU Impact 2025, which made clear that DU is committed to "pioneering new approaches in higher education that impact individuals, communities and the public good." Colorado Women's College is poised to join the highly collaborative and multi-disciplinary university community required to realize the transformative directions set forth in the University's plan. Interim Dean Linda Olson was appointed in May 2015 to guide this transformation while also guiding the teach-out plan for remaining CWC women. Continuing CWC students have been administratively transferred to University College to continue their CWC degree plans, and support systems are in place to ensure their degree attainment.

This strategic plan to reimagine CWC's future reflects an iterative process involving stakeholders from across DU's campus, metro Denver, and the nation. A wide range of ideas and aspirations were gathered, sifted and curated to create this working document for a transformed Colorado Women's College in the form of two major Innovations. These proposed Innovations have been mapped against DU Impact 2025 to ensure alignment with and relevance to the University's vision for the future.

CWC Vision

To be a global leader in advancing women in the 21st century through transformative education, leadership development, public good work, and research.

CWC Mission Statement

Colorado Women's College at the University of Denver is dedicated to the advancement of women through:

- supporting innovative approaches to women's life-long learning & leadership development in order to be self-sufficient participants, decision-makers and social change leaders in all areas of society.
- catalyzing collaborative research and artistic endeavors that create knowledge, inform policy, transform practice and question existing paradigms in order to support women's equity and advancement.
- convening collaborative work, training, and public dialogue that enables women and girls to realize their full talent potential and make significant contributions in Denver, the Rocky Mountain West region, and the world.

INNOVATIONS, INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

With an overarching goal of establishing CWC as a collaborative hub for women's advancement in the Rocky Mountain West region and beyond, we will pursue the following Innovations to realize CWC's reimagined mission and DU's Impact 2025's transformative directions. We will work for wider impact through partnerships across the University of Denver's colleges and units as well as within our distinguished Merle Chambers Center for the Advancement of Women with partners such as The Women's Foundation of Colorado (WFCO) and Higher Education Resource Services (HERS). We will seek to involve all sectors local and global to join each partner's unique histories, experiences, knowledge and work to advance women and girls. It is within this collaborative spirit that the following two Innovations frame the emerging strategic planning for the future of CWC.

INNOVATION ONE: Launch Colorado Women's College Institute for Women's Leadership & Advancement (*name TBD*)

We will create the Colorado Women's College Institute for Women's Leadership & Advancement, a cross-campus initiative to be housed in our Chambers Center building, under which we will develop and implement innovative programs that will help women across DU, the Rocky Mountain West region, and beyond to advance in their education, careers, and civic efforts.

The so-called Colorado Paradox suggests that we attract college-educated leaders from outside our state and continue to see fewer of our own rise up the ranks to lead our state. Developing girls and young women early and with strong community connections is therefore critical. Through the Institute, we will ignite women's life-long learning and leadership development, to enable DU women to be self-sufficient participants, decision-makers and social change leaders in all areas of society.

The CWC Institute for Women's Leadership & Advancement will support women and girls' development through university course-based programs, non-credit workshops or training, and revenue-generating and social enterprise models that focus on the campus, community and global advancement of women as leaders. We will design programs and initiatives for women and girls that include but go beyond traditional university services of health promotion and violence prevention to broader innovative educational programs for women's economic and leadership advancement, creative and innovative thinking and application, entrepreneurship, STEM initiatives, community service, and more. Examples of potential work include the following initiatives and supporting programs:

Women's Leadership Initiative

1) CWC Women's Leadership Scholars Program

The CWC Leadership Scholars Program, launched in September 2016, is a cohort learning experience that develops diverse, thoughtful, civically-responsible, and emerging women leaders. This program capitalizes on the openness and supportive environment that is the heart of CWC, and will target an intentionally-diverse community of undergraduate women who possess qualities that suggest additional engagement and co-curricular activities will accelerate their advancement.

CWC Leadership Scholars will work on independent or small group public good projects, as well as work together as a larger CWC Scholar community. Sequenced women-only courses leading to a minor in leadership studies over their four-year undergraduate experience will enhance the young women's understanding of gendered leadership, personal identity, teaming skills, decision making, and intercultural competencies required for work, community and global impact. CWC Leadership Scholars will also have access to job shadowing, mentorships, apprenticeships, and service learning opportunities.

The Chambers Center is the home of the CWC Leadership Scholars Program. Qualified incoming undergraduate women receive scholarships of up to \$7,500 annually; this award will “stack” on top of any other institutional aid for which the scholar is eligible. Twelve students were accepted into the program in its inaugural year, with hopes to build to 20 each year and 80 overall.

Note: While the initial CWC Leadership Scholars Program focuses on traditional undergraduate women, a second scholars program for nontraditional women but of similar nature should be explored as current CWC students matriculate out of UCOL. This program could be a joint effort by CWC and UCOL to create a stronger pipeline for women to complete undergraduate degrees and grow in their citizen leadership capacity.

2) **DU Women Lead (name TBD)**

CWC will focus on leadership development for all women at DU – students, faculty, and staff. Internal meetings have been held with Human Resources, University Career Center, Office of Alumni Relations, Women’s Leadership Council, Women’s Coalition, WAND, the Feminist Student Alliance, and HERS to develop a cooperative framework for student and staff/faculty leadership development.

An all-campus leadership development program for DU women students will be developed, with pilot events and workshop offerings in the 2016-2017 academic year. These programs will cast a wide net to appeal to any DU woman wishing to develop her personal and career skills for pathways to success and leadership in any setting. One major focus will be to increase earning power for DU women graduates entering the workforce. This program will include mentorships, job-shadowing opportunities, internships, and women-focused career advising across DU.

Several pathway programs for DU women faculty and staff career development and advancement will be explored and pilots developed. CWC is currently developing a new “mountain” for the internal HR *Colorado 14ers People Development Program*, focused on women’s leadership for faculty and staff. Discussions are also underway with HERS to capitalize on their longstanding training of women in higher education to pilot a local program that supports junior women faculty in their tenure process and strengthen the pipeline of women faculty and researchers for higher ed leadership. This program might serve as a model for other institutions.

We will develop a *Women as Global Leaders* course offering, a 4-credit LDRS course, open to all undergraduates, that will explore the state of women as global leaders, current theoretical approaches to understanding women leading in the global context, and competencies required for effective intercultural communication and leading in a multi-cultural world. This course may be structured to meet the study abroad course requirement to prepare students for study abroad.

A *Girls of Action* initiative could also capitalize on relationships with local public schools to jointly develop a curriculum that supports the identity development of girls as community activists and leaders. Explorations of after-school, weekend conference, and summer camp curricula will be undertaken. Partnerships with the Latino Leadership Institute, The Women’s Foundation of Colorado (WFCO), DU’s Center for Multicultural Excellence, and DU Admissions will be explored in order to serve an ever-growing demographic of Latinas and African American girls and young women.

3) **Rocky Mountain Women’s Leading Edge (name TBD)**

This one-year selective program will focus on the competencies required to advance women in private, public and community sectors. Similar to the Latino Leadership Institute and the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership on our own campus, this program would seek to advance women beyond early to mid-career. Discussions are underway to create leadership certificates and badging programs that provide workplace credentialing for advancement.

*Note: In June 2016 we hosted a pilot three-day **Denver Women in Leadership** workshop for professional women across various work sectors interested in becoming more influential in their careers. This program allowed CWC and DCB to jointly explore future women-only executive and leadership training programs that we will offer in the greater Denver area and beyond to advance women in the workplace. Assessment of this workshop and future planning is progressing.*

Women's Advancement Initiative

4) STEM Careers

Since significant gaps still persist for women's full participation in some STEM and business fields such as computing, engineering and entrepreneurship, CWC is moving forward with the development of new programs, for both traditional undergraduate women as well as post-traditional and professional development initiatives.

Applied computing, such as coding, is critical for economic self-sufficiency for women, yet women are still vastly underrepresented. With University College we are exploring a women-focused cohort *Web Development Boot Camp*, with a possible Summer 2017 pilot. *Girls Who Code* programs and *TECH Prep* opportunities are being considered that could capitalize on cross-college partnerships with UCOL, X-ITE, and the Ritchie School.

Pipeline programs for Summer 2017 include assisting women NSM (sciences) faculty in their hosting of the *DU SciTech Summer Camp for Middle School Girls* and providing oversight and assistance for *FEMME in STEM*, a program launched by undergraduates to provide Saturday science exploration days for girls during the school year. Combining these programs each summer will support cross-college collaborative programs to support girls and women in STEM majors at DU along with career path mentoring, internships, externships and workplace readiness skills.

Conversations to advocate for more women in our undergraduate programs in computing and engineering have led to a recent commitment by the Ritchie School faculty to offer a women's cohort-based beginning computer programming course sequence this coming summer. This sequence will allow women to re-enter a path to a minor in computing even if they had not originally declared this major or minor.

5) Women's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Workshops

Innovation, entrepreneurship and technology are critical to CWC's efforts to advance women and girls. CWC participated with X-ITE in a *Women in Innovation* panel discussion on August 17, 2016, as well as hosted a dinner and dialogue to ignite and define CWC's role in advancing women and girls in this area. We have continued to engage with Project X-ITE leadership through the Fall Term to explore how to best launch an innovation space and program for women in the Chambers Center. To date no such innovation space for women-only has emerged in the Denver Metro area. This could provide the much-needed support for women who historically are underfunded for start-ups. CWC would like to build supportive programs and a network for women in the male-dominated maker-space and start-up world. A recent meeting with three women leading top tech companies helped to provide more insight into organizational interests and support for developing women in the tech industry. Discussions on a Women's Innovation Network are progressing through Project X-ITE.

6) Women Leading through Philanthropy

Very preliminary discussions have occurred with separate stakeholders including Letty Bass from the Chambers Family Fund, Laureen Casteel from WFCO, and David Miller from the new DU Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise, regarding the development of a women in philanthropy program. This could be offered to DU students and alumnae, as well as Denver-area philanthropists. Potential programming could include training for women family members participating in family foundations or businesses to prepare them for top leadership positions.

INNOVATION TWO: Create the Colorado Women’s College Collaboratory (CWC^C)

We will create the Colorado Women’s College Collaboratory (CWC^C), a 21st century hub for women’s advancement in the Rocky Mountain West region that capitalizes on place and space, and catalyzes collaborative research and engagement that creates knowledge, informs policy, and transforms practice to support women’s parity in all sectors of society.

A collaboratory, as defined by Katrina Muff in her edited work,

...is a facilitated space open to everybody, and in particular to concerned stakeholders, to meet on an equal basis to co-create new solutions for societal, environmental or economic issues by drawing on the emergent future. It is a place where people can think, work and learn together to invent their common futures.

The philosophy of the collaboratory revolves around an inclusive learning environment where action learning and action research meet and where the formal separation of knowledge production and knowledge transfer dissolves.¹

The Colorado Women’s College Collaboratory will focus on gender-informed and thoughtful teaching, cross-disciplinary research, community building, and applied learning. CWC^C will advance women and girl’s development, success, and leadership, all integrated through a purposeful business model. By reimagining the stand-alone college as an expanded space both physically in the Chambers Center building as well as virtually, multiple stakeholders will research critical problems and co-create relevant solutions to the advancement of women and girls. Examples of potential work include the following initiatives and supporting programs:

Research, Creative Expression, and Knowledge Transfer Initiative

CWC^C will advance research on relevant topics in women’s advancement and leadership in Colorado, the Rocky Mountain West region, and beyond. This will include action-based community research, scholarly work, multi-disciplinary work, art focused explorations and partnerships with community organizations and employers. We will approach our work as multi-disciplinary and cross-college, including shared co-programming and academic offerings to advance women. We will tackle “sticky” problems or ‘grand challenges’ such as societal norms around bias at work, role parity at home, institutionalized barriers to advancement, pay equity, and self-sufficiency.

1) Women and Girls Knowledge Bridges

CWC^C will actively participate in DU Impact 2025’s creation of knowledge bridges across DU, by establishing mechanisms for cross-college collaborative research on women and girls and current problem areas that impede women’s advancement and full-participation in social, economic and political life. Problem-based research and knowledge design, a hallmark of knowledge bridges, is ideally suited to issues of gender equity and advancement for women and girls.

The September 2016 release of CWCC’s first funded research report, *The Impact of a \$12 Minimum Wage on Women in Colorado*, was a strong example of cross-college and community collaboration, as well as creation of a knowledge bridge across DU. This research project – initiated and funded by CWC to support The Women’s Foundation of Colorado’s identification of a problem-based research topic – successfully engaged researchers from DU’s Daniels College of Business and the Graduate School of Social Work, and resulted in extensive media coverage for DU and CWC. The report was also credited with contributing to the successful passage of Amendment 70 to the Colorado State Constitution, increasing the state minimum wage to \$12/hour by 2020.

¹ Muff, Katrina. *The Collaboratory: A co-creative stakeholder engagement process for solving complex problems.* (2014)

2) Research Partnerships

CWC has joined the national *Collaborative to Advance Equity through Research* with the encouragement of IRISE. Collaborative members have made commitments to invest resources in research at their own institution over the next five years, and work collaboratively with other members to build new connections, share promising practices, and support the advancement of research addressing the lives of women and girls of color. The Collaborative currently has more than 50 members whose combined financial commitments at their own institutions to support and produce research totals more than \$75 million. CWC's initial year-long commitment will involve a review of existing research at DU and sharing the self-study results with Collaborative members. (<http://equitythroughresearch.com/institutions/>)

3) Research Repository and Exchange

CWC^C will create a repository of any research focused on women's issues throughout DU. Collecting data from all studies at DU that include gender descriptive data and findings important to the advancement of women and gender equity would provide deeper understanding and action plans for problem solving. We have also begun developing a research agenda at CWC^C that expands current research and identifies gaps addressing women's lives, including women and girls of color. We will share stories, experiences and new insights through appropriate mediums such as blogs, webinars, and videos. Networking with larger national and international data bases will be explored. We will also serve as a convening space for those who want to work on research for women and girls, across all of DU. Plans for 2017 include a January 23rd webinar workshop for DU faculty on *Building Collaborative Teams*, and a day-long *CWC^C Research Symposium* on March 31st.

4) Community and Industry Engagement

CWC^C will engage with community leaders and public and non-for-profit institutions to assess knowledge and needs regarding gender equity in the greater Denver area. Discussions are currently underway to support the Denver Women's Commission and Office on Women and Families for a *Gender Equity Summit* in May 2017, which will bring local elected officials from around Colorado to Denver to share ideas and experiences.

In partnership with industry, CWC^C will host funding competitions to spark, fuel and invest in the advancement of women and girls, convert research into hands-on approaches and skills that change behaviors, and forge partnerships with industry committed to advancing women in the workplace and in board governance.

CWC^C also values artistic expression and wants to support the vision and integrity of individual artists and arts groups collaborating to explore issues impacting women and girls. Whether promoting large-scale DU District arts festivals designed to engage the full DU and greater Denver communities or using art as a means to access individual engagement, we see the arts as central to a mission focused on societal equity for women.

DU Women's Advancement Center Initiative

We will create collaborative space for DU women's-focused work to consolidate, cultivate and encourage more dynamic and impactful programming for women on and off campus as they meet the challenges and opportunities for academic success and career development. We will host engagement initiatives to bring others to our campus, raise awareness of CWC as a place for women to focus on career pathways, and engage new audiences and supporters in this important work.

5) Existing DU Women's Groups

CWC will provide administrative support and coordination for the 7-8 existing women's groups here at DU. Currently, these groups operate autonomously, but with some affiliation that has been guided through CME. They would benefit from more information-sharing, a physical gathering space, and collaborative efforts. Following outreach and engagement in Summer/Fall 2016, CWC is now the agreed "home" for these DU women's groups, and we have begun to host weekly/monthly meetings here at the Chambers Center for these formerly disparate groups.

CWC is also providing leadership and support for the *2017 DU Women's Conference*, an annual event, which would ideally lead to a more nationally-recognized program. Creation of a Women's Faculty Club (*name tbd*) is also being explored. While Gender and Women's Studies (GWST) has its historical academic home in AHSS, space is available for delivery of courses and co-curricular programs. A strong tie would benefit the vision and goals of CWC and GWST. A shared post-doc appointment could be pursued to provide a faculty member to teach GWST and the CWC Leadership Scholars courses and promote shared opportunities for elevated academic co-programming and research.

6) Legacy CWC Programs

With the help of CWC alumnae and friends, we are building upon legacy CWC programs that have made single-gender learning so impactful, and will include these legacy programs of CWC in meaningful ways for more women on campus. We have celebrated milestones through several beloved traditions such as the *Graduates Tea*, and celebrated *Hanging of the Greens* in early December. A new tradition of green and white commencement scholar cords was implemented with spring 2016 graduation and will continue. The *CWC Alumnae Association* has also become re-energized and has resumed meeting at the Chambers Center, and is eager to engage with transitioning CWC students and our new CWC Leadership Scholars.

7) Women's Academic and Career Support

As CWC women transfer to UCOL, several new programs have been established as part of the Collaboratory to serve women's continuing education and success, particularly in online learning. They include:

- *Online Launchpad*, a weeklong offering of in-person tutorials and support to help women launch their on-line courses well;
- *On-line Mondays*, held every week for any woman taking an on-line class to receive coaching and support to be successful in that environment;
- Tutoring, women-only study sessions, and weekly academic coaching drop-in hours at the Pioneer Resource Center (PRC), to provide community and safe space for academic focus.
- Co-development of programs to attract and support non-traditional women's educational success through UCOL, to open new avenues for diverse women at DU.

Supporting and developing women in their career development will be central to the Women's Advancement Center. We are collaborating with DU's Career Center and Alumni Office for women's career planning and coaching programs to disrupt the trends of our women graduates landing jobs that often pay more than 20% less than their male peers holding the same degrees. For undergraduate women, we are exploring Winter/Spring 2017 implementation of the AAUW's *Start Smart* program on salary negotiation, and the *Elect Her* program on student leadership training.

Finding ways to both attract and support women veterans to undergraduate and graduate education will be explored. This would involve cross-college partnerships with University College, Graduate School of Professional Psychology and other interested stakeholders.

8) Women Change Makers Speakers Series

CWC has a history of successful salon-type events and discussions to highlight women of achievement. This series will celebrate women who inspire, motivate and create change throughout all sectors of society today. Panels will be cross-coordinated the DU community, building partners, and the community to advance one DU learning together. In Fall 2016, CWC has successfully engaged in public dialogue and initiatives both here on the DU campus and in the broader Denver community, to share our continuing commitment to women's leadership and advancement. Recent events included *Women Learning Together: Debriefing the 2016 Presidential Election* on November 17, 2016 at the Chambers Center; three film screenings of *Strong Sisters: Elected Women in Colorado* on October 18th, 2016 at the Chambers Center; and an exhibit at the *TEDX Mile High Women's Conference, "It's About Time"* on October 28th, 2016 at the Buell Theater to engage conference participants in our minimum wage research and real-life impacts on women. Plans for 2017 include a *DU-Colorado Women's Hall of Fame Portrait Exhibition* from March 27-June 30, 2017, with monthly "lunch and learn" sessions held at the Chambers Center.

Collaborative Work Space and Convening initiative

Reaffirming the original intent of our wonderful facility, the Merle Chambers Center for the Advancement of Women, we are creating strategies to activate our space to stimulate cross-organizational problem-solving and support of organizations focused on women and girls. With our building partners WFCO and HERS, along with the Chambers Family Fund, we will engage and support women as self-sufficient participants, decision-makers and social change leaders in all areas of society.

With the hope of utilizing the best and highest use of the Chambers Center and open up revenue-generating opportunities through space leasing, we have joined the *Nonprofit Centers Network* to help guide our thinking. The following would provide revenue-generating opportunities and stimulate cross-organizational problem-solving and support:

9) Multi-Tenant Shared Space

In the same way that the Posner Center has become a locus for international development and The Alliance Center a hub for sustainability, the CWC Collaboratory can become a base for organizations and social entrepreneurs focused on gender equity through education, the arts, business development, social justice, and capacity building. These organizations will share CWC's and our building partners' beliefs and values, and their work will support our vision and mission of advancing women in the 21st century.

The second floor of the Chambers Center can be used to provide both short- and long-term office and desk rentals to organizations and individuals. These shared work space tenants will have better-together goals but autonomous operations, and benefit from shared services and the opportunity to exchange ideas and collaborate as appropriate. The Pioneer Resource Center (PRC) can be a venue for technology boot camps and an innovation/entrepreneurship center for women. Currently three local women-focused nonprofit organizations have approached us regarding the possibility of locating to the Chambers Center.

10) Meeting and Event Space

Beyond providing office space for like-minded individuals and organizations, the Collaboratory can also provide meeting and event space for programs that have recurring needs, both within and outside DU. Examples include *BW-Lead (Black Women Lead)*, hosted at the Chambers Center with the help of CWC funding in February 2016 and piloted by the Center for Multi-Cultural Excellence (CME) as a day-long leadership development and college exposure program for high school women from around the metro area. *Girls Global Summer Leadership Institute* is an emerging idea that would seek partnership with The Women's Foundation of Colorado and DU's internationalization office, to bring pre-college women from around the world for a week-long exchange with select Colorado high school girls.

In addition to office space, the Chambers Center has a variety of classrooms and meeting rooms that can be rented by women's-focused organizations for a variety of events, such as Board meetings, staff/volunteer trainings, receptions, or small-scale conferences. We will continue discussions with multiple stakeholders, including the Chambers Family Foundation, DU's Conference & Event Services Department and our internal building partners. We will strive to create mutually beneficial plans for a physical Collaboratory work space and a DU women's advancement center that supports internal and external opportunities that support women.

Implementation and Assessment

In order to realize the Innovations described in this strategic plan, a companion implementation work plan has been created with continuously updated goals, program descriptions, staff assignments, timelines, resource identification and assessment or outcomes measurements. Both documents will provide guidance as we undertake this start-up-like venture to be a *global leader in advancing women in the 21st century through transformative education, leadership development, public good work, and research.*

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