

Professional and Continuing Education Elevated

**Strategic Plan 2018-2022**

University College

Professional and Continuing Education Elevated

In 1938 the University of Denver had the progressive foresight to introduce University College programming to help working adults earn degrees by attending classes in the evenings and on weekends. On the eve of the 80th anniversary of University College’s introduction, we are poised to reaffirm this heritage of forward thinking for a new era in higher education. By implementing the initiatives outlined in this plan, University College will take a national leadership position by representing the Rocky Mountain region within the network of universities that house top-tier colleges of continuing and professional education. This network stretches from the East Coast (Northeastern University, Georgetown, Boston University, Harvard) to the Midwest (Northwestern University, University of Wisconsin) to the West Coast (University of Washington, Berkeley, UCLA). These colleges are looked to nationally for their leadership in providing high-value educational experiences for adult learners. University College and the University of Denver will join and add to this group’s progressive practices.

This new era is witnessing the reinvention of higher education, brought about by sweeping societal changes and accelerated through technological innovations. Approaches to delivering education that seemed novel a decade ago—online courses; flipped classrooms; Hyflex courses, where online and classroom students learn together; boot camps; competency-based learning; stackable credentials—have been embraced wholeheartedly by adult students and employers. While the needs of employees and their organizations are driving this evolution, so too are changes in professional fields.

Today, more frequent and meaningful replenishment of skill and knowledge sets is a necessity to keep up with the accelerating pace of change impacting our personal, professional, and civic lives. The career paths of today’s entry- to mid-level professionals are far less linear than those of the generations that preceded them. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the typical Millennial will hold 20 jobs over a lifetime, compared to 11 jobs for Baby Boomers. Additionally, the Institute for the Future predicts that 85% of all jobs in 2030 haven’t even been invented yet.

Post-traditional (students who attend part-time and are essential wage earners) and adult students are becoming the new majority of the higher education student population. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, adult learners now make up approximately 40% of the entire U.S. student population, and 85% of undergraduate students are considered post-traditional. These students are not well-served by the infrastructures that universities have built to serve traditional-aged students and their parents.

University College has been honing our expertise in delivering practice- and problem-based curricula and building vertically integrated capabilities—marketing and enrollment management, admission, student support and advising, instructional design and support—in order to serve the specific and unique needs of adult learners, and forge internal and external partnerships. These efforts have positioned us to amplify our impact on working professionals, lifelong learners, and our community, and continue our ascent to becoming a nationally known top-tier college of professional and continuing education.

DU IMPACT 2025 inspired us to envision a future of profound impact for students, employers, alumni, and community that reinforces the personalized and high-value experiences expected from the University of Denver.

This new era presents a game-changing opportunity for University College. With ever-increasing innovative, market-driven options available to learners, whose demands are, at the same time, becoming more and more sophisticated, University College will stand as the clear choice for adult learners seeking professional and personal development throughout their lifetime.

It’s the era we’ve been preparing for.

**Welcome to Market-Driven Higher Education**

Today’s adult learners expect the right knowledge, skills, and experiential learning opportunities at the right time, with formats that fit into their busy lives, and price points that are in line with quality expectations, all leading to a high-value experience and an exceptional return on investment (ROI). They also expect a tailored, transparent, customer-centered experience. Those expectations increase continually.

University College will become THE hub for high-value lifelong learning in Colorado by serving and exceeding the expectations of the modern adult learner as the preeminent provider of professional and continuing education. We use “hub” to suggest an epicenter of activity where the energy around developing and delivering best practices for serving adult learners is generated by the cross-pollination of multifunctional teams setting new benchmarks for excellence in the areas of market research, instructional design, student services and coaching, teaching and learning, and enrollment management.

University College’s passion for providing programming to help adult learners reach their professional and personal goals through continued education will attract likeminded colleagues from across the University, the community, and nationally to join in the creative pursuit of innovative program development and instructional methods. University College will become the place where creative and timely ideas for programming are generated by us as well as brought to us by others for evaluation and implementation; a place where there is robust interplay of ideas and action among staff, faculty, and community and corporate partners; a place where ideas are ultimately realized as high-quality, exceptionally delivered programming.

This cross-collaboration will result in a robust and dynamic catalog of credit-bearing and noncredit offerings that serve the varied and evolving needs of young and mid-career professionals as they more frequently retool in order to move their careers forward in an economy where increased automation and technological advancement rapidly modify career paths. These programs will draw adult learners to campus in increasing numbers, reach others digitally through online learning, and still others as face-to-face and blended programming is offered in the communities throughout Colorado. University College’s expertise, and breadth and quality of offerings focused on the modern adult learner, will be unmatched locally and result in the University of Denver being the provider of choice for adult learners and community and corporate partners when in need of the most timely and effectively delivered educational programming. We will be the educational leader elevating the Front Range area in becoming globally recognized for workforce readiness and talent development, serving as an indispensable asset in Denver’s ascension to a world-class metropolitan area. This aligns with DU Impact 2025 Transformative Direction 3, Strategic Initiative 2, which asserts DU’s intention to “affirm and expand our presence as a major anchor organization with a range of strategies and opportunities designed to increase our impact on economic and cultural development.”

**Our Mission**

To deliver enduring professional growth and personal development by providing adult learners access to the University of Denver through alternative educational pathways.

**Our Vision**

To be a recognized center of excellence in the advancement of the field of Professional and Continuing Education, and a force for educational and professional success, inspiration, and impact across the Rocky Mountain region and beyond.

**Our Core Values**

We commit to:

Honor the individual -- we meet others where they are; work inclusively; and embrace diversity of thought, background, and perspective

Champion learning -- we know first-hand the powerful outcomes that result when education extends over a lifetime

Transform lives – we make a positive, lasting impact on the lives of others

Work together – for us, this begins with the cultivation of mutual understanding and extends to collaboration and collective ownership of results

Pursue excellence – we go the extra mile to deliver exemplary educational offerings and service to others

**Our Strategic Initiatives**

1. Build on the excellence and expand the scope in the core programming portfolio that has been the foundation of the College’s success and expertise for the past thirty-plus years (aligns with TD One, SI 2; TD Four SI 4)
   1. **Accelerate the Momentum of our Current Programming**. We will accelerate the momentum we’ve generated during the past several years by expanding the breadth and reach of the following, which encompasses our current portfolio of professional and continuing education offerings:
      1. Market-based and nationally ranked graduate and undergraduate degrees and certificates offered face-to-face, online, and in blended modalities that create T-shaped professionals (characterized by deep disciplinary knowledge in at least one area, and the ability to understand systematic relationships among and work effectively across the boundaries between disciplines) through a curriculum focused on the application of knowledge;
      2. Noncredit professional development offerings through scaling of the Center for Professional Development;
      3. Noncredit personal enrichment programming through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and the Enrichment Program.
   2. **Add to Current High-Value Programming Through the Continued Building of a Robust Catalog of Alternative and Stackable Credentials**. Our experience at the forefront of delivering high-value student-centered learning experiences for adult learners has taught us how to package knowledge acquisition and skills development into different formats designed to meet students where they are. To meet the evolving needs and increasingly less-linear career pathways of current, future, and former students, University College will continue to deliver an innovative portfolio of credit and noncredit programming in accessible formats that lead to professional advancement and/or personal enrichment. Some of these formats will be intentionally designed to be integrated educational experiences in which students can take alternative paths toward degree completion, or acquire a series of shorter modular credentials that might “stack” into a larger academic credential.

Through our Center for Professional Development (CPD)—which will serve as a “sandbox” for the University to incubate and pilot new degree programming ideas, and experiment with more modular formats of programming like boot camps; competency-based, self-paced training; certificates; custom corporate programs; and badges—we will strengthen DU’s relationship with alumni and create new relationships with members of our community who might otherwise turn to other organizations to provide them with these valuable modular offerings. The CPD will also serve as the home for awarding Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for professional licensure and recertification in fields like teaching, psychology, and social work through programming developed by faculty from across DU. These shorter educational experiences will also serve as new student recruiting channels for DU graduate and undergraduate degrees and certificates.  
  
EXAMPLE: In the spring of 2017 University College launched a noncredit coding boot camp for web design. In the first cohort of fifty-three students, three students were relatively recent (three to five years) traditional University of Denver undergraduate alumni who were interested in adding a new skill set to their portfolio to strengthen their career opportunities. In the subsequent two boot camp cohorts we have engaged seven additional DU alumni, equaling ten alumni whom we have engaged by offering the type of learning experience that is most relevant to them at this point in their professional journeys and development—extending the University’s value to them beyond their initial degree attainment. Additionally, there are early indications that this approach is also working as a way to generate interest among the boot camp participants in our credit-bearing graduate programs, illustrating the value of unique cross-program offerings like these.

* 1. **Deepen Community Engagement**. We will deepen and expand engagement with the Denver, Front Range, Colorado, and the DU alumni communities to leverage and achieve our strategic initiatives of developing and delivering leading-edge, credit-bearing, and noncredit professional development, and noncredit personal enrichment programming that meet the rapidly evolving needs of adult learners’ professional and personal lives. We will continue to deliver these offerings in the most engaging online and face-to-face campus approaches, and we will begin offering this programming in the communities where young and mid-career professionals live and work.

We will expand our marketing and outreach efforts with regard to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and Enrichment Program, ensuring that the exceptional reputations both programs already have carry even farther into the Front Range community, and cementing them as part of the University College and DU community-based portfolio of offerings.

We will also build on our current outreach to alumni by partnering with Global Networks to help engage DU alumni of all ages by intentionally promoting existing programming benefits to alumni, as well as serving as Global Networks’ partner in content development and delivery. This will help ensure that alumni view the University as a lifelong partner in matters of skills development and knowledge acquisition, and want to be a part of this vibrant, smart, and compassionate community of lifelong learners.

* 1. **Enhance Inclusive Excellence Model**. We will build on our position of having the largest percentage of students from underrepresented populations and veteran and active duty military at DU by increasing these populations from 30% to 40% of our student body. We will strengthen our current inclusive culture by becoming more intentional about initiatives and resourcing to support inclusive excellence. We will accomplish this modeling of inclusive excellence practices through the hiring of faculty and staff, and championing policies that progress our underrepresented student, veteran and military friendliness.

1. Become the University’s resource center to evaluate and deliver market-based professional programming for adult learners (aligns with TD One, SI 2)  
   1. **New Markets Team**. University College will take on the charge to lead a data-driven research approach to exploring emerging market-based programming opportunities that might be delivered through University College solely or in partnership with other academic units. This *New Markets* *Team* will be intentionally focused on identifying viable market-predictive programs for the University to help address workforce readiness and assisting partner academic units in meeting their strategic goals. We will partner to identify, develop, and deliver programming (online degrees and certificates, noncredit professional development, and other forms of alternative credentials) to adult learners that address the needs of changing and emerging professional sectors. A range of flexible program and faculty structures might be employed, depending on the market opportunity and the partnering academic unit, that would facilitate agility in launching, management of, and when necessary discontinuing of, professional graduate programs. This *New Markets* *Team* will work closely with, and in many instances, serve to support the activities and objectives of the Senior Advisor to the Chancellor on Academic Innovation.   
        
      EXAMPLE: A pilot example of identifying market opportunities that align with strategic priorities and are best served by multiple academic units is the recent joint program initiative between University College’s Transportation Institute and the Daniels College of Business (DCB). The Provost has provided seed funding to hire a jointly appointed non-tenure-track faculty member in supply chain management. This faculty member will be responsible for developing and serving as the lead instructor in a supply chain management graduate certificate to be offered online in partnership between DCB and the Transportation Institute, with the tuition revenue being evenly shared between both units.
   2. **Adult Learner Service Center Model**. For decades, University College has developed the infrastructure and expertise to serve the adult learner in a highly personalized manner. By leveraging this existing structure and expanding it to provide a “service center” model, University College can serve as an internal institutional resource to partner with and support other units in delivering programming to the online and adult learner markets. This “one DU” approach will provide for a more optimized use of institutional resources by avoiding the tendency of each academic unit to build redundant structures in multiple locations across campus. This model will help other academic units to realize the potential of the professional adult learner market with minimal distraction from their primary focus of delivering research-based programs to traditional undergraduate and graduate students. University College would partner and/or consult with other academic units based on their needs in areas such as the following: market research, program business modeling, enrollment management and marketing, new student cultivation, instructional design, and faculty instructional support. This model would also provide the University with an alternative to dependence on external third parties for launching specialized niche professional graduate programs, keeping significant consulting and revenue sharing funds within the University.

EXAMPLE: In the spring of 2017 University College consulted with the Ritchie School of Engineering and Computer Science (RSECS) to help launch their Master’s degree in data science for the adult professional market. This entailed University College’s Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management and Marketing providing guidance on structures and strategies for marketing, recruitment, and prospect cultivation. A team made up of RSECS and University College met twice monthly to implement and track progress. The resulting plan included the coordination of RSECS and University College teams to maximize resource utilization. The University College marketing department helped execute the digital marketing plan, and the University College student services department served as the call center to field initial calls from prospects and initial outreach to inquiries received online. Qualified inquiries were then handed off to the RSECS admission and advising staff and faculty. This arrangement allowed RSECS to enter the adult professional market with expertise and support resources that they did not possess within their unit.

1. Lead the Professional and Continuing Education Field Into the New Era for Higher Education by Implementing a Holistic Approach to High-value Student Engagement and Relationship Cultivation (aligns with TD One, SI 3 and SI 5; TD Two SI 4; and TD Four SI 1)  
   1. **Comprehensive Coaching for Adult Learners**. We will become a holistic resource for adult learners of all ages and stages by going beyond traditional academic advising and offering comprehensive, personalized education coaching. We will help learners navigate their professional and civic journeys by creating personalized pathways that help learners tap into all of DU’s diverse programs, services, and schools in ways that best meet their individual needs. We will serve as a conduit between the adult learners and the rich resources of University College and other appropriate University opportunities.

EXAMPLE: As part of the enrollment management and marketing partnership with RSECS discussed in item 2b, University College also helped RSECS fill their fall professional Master’s degrees in cyber security and data science, thus serving as the intake center and initial follow-up with prospective students for these programs. This University College team serves the same function for the University College Master of Science in Information Systems Security. Because this team was trained to understand how these two programs serve student needs differently, they are able to help students make the best program choice to reach their goals. If the initial program that the student had inquired about is not the right fit for them, we are able to suggest another option that might be a fit. This increases the likelihood of the University successfully recruiting and attaining students that we have spent resources to attract. This pilot with RSECS is one example of the type of more formal structure a strategic initiative like this could cultivate with many DU units.

* 1. **Develop Community Engagement Platform**. We will develop and implement a community engagement platform that facilitates customized, proactive engagement with students, alumni, and other community members regarding programming opportunities to help advance their careers or satisfy their curiosity based on their career stages, life transitions, and personal interests and passions.   
       
     EXAMPLE: A graduate from GSSW who has worked at a local nonprofit for the past three years receives a promotion to manage her department. She posts the exciting news on her LinkedIn profile and updates Pioneer Connect with her new position. This information prompts our platform to create a customized email communication with congratulations and information about an upcoming workshop offered through the Center for Professional Development on fundamental skills for new managers, and graduate certificates available through Daniels College of Business and University College in the areas of management and leadership.
  2. **Institute the Narrative “*Transcript***.” Employers and professionals alike have demonstrated a strong desire for a better understanding of what learners know how to do after completing learning experiences of all types. Moving beyond the traditional transcript will be essential for setting expectations and eliminating uncertainty about what students have learned and, in turn, what they are capable of doing. The narrative transcript is on the rise. We can add true value for adult learners by better describing what each credential (credit or noncredit) means in each unique context. We will develop a platform to verify and produce a competency-based Portfolio that clearly showcases each learner’s knowledge and capabilities beyond the generalities of course titles and descriptions—for example, providing credit through prior learning assessment and attainment of skills and competencies. Allowing graduates to easily display their expertise and competencies to employers and colleagues will enhance their professional opportunities.
  3. **Dedicate On-Campus Space to Adult Learners**. University College will become a physical and digital hub for lifelong learning by creating a location on campus dedicated to the advancement of the adult learner. We will create a welcoming, adult-oriented, accessible physical presence at the University by leveraging smart classroom and building technology to create top-tier classroom and administrative space, as well as a community space specifically created for post-traditional learners. This site on the University campus will serve adult learners through round-the-clock utilization—classrooms that serve the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute during the weekdays; and University College Hyflex graduate and undergraduate courses, Enrichment Program courses, and Center for Professional Development courses in the evenings and on weekends. This dedicated location will provide University College the space—both metaphorical and physical—to experiment with instructional design and instructional technology in order to continue to foster new and innovative developments that serve the broad spectrum of adult learning needs. And it will invite the Denver community to learn with us, exposing them to the University of Denver in a way that delivers on its promise of being a world-class university.

1. Pioneer Adult Learning Research and Instruction (aligns with TD One SI 2; TD Two, SI 2)  
   1. We will become a regional and national leader in professional and continuing education through achieving innovative excellence in online and adult teaching and learning. We will be the leaders in inclusive instructional best practices for the Rocky Mountain region by conducting research and development, hosting symposia, and incentivizing faculty to experiment with innovative teaching tools and techniques. Echoing DU Impact 2025, “our faculty members impact our students and the world when they use new forms of scholarship and engagement to develop innovative ideas and teach in new ways.”

One example of this type of pioneering, which is already taking place, is the launching of the DU Video Creation Studio. University College, along with IT, Facilities, and the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL), has led the charge for the building and implementation of this unique on-campus studio in which, at the push of one simple button, faculty can record and edit unique, high-production-value videos for use in their on-campus or online courses. These types of innovative approaches to instruction will help pave the way for excellence in teaching and learning.

1. Strategically Revitalize the College’s Brand  
   1. Within the Front Range, we will elevate our brand so the community recognizes University College as the go-to place for professional and continuing education. The fall quarter of 2018 will mark the 80th anniversary of the introduction of University College programming at the University of Denver. This may serve as an opportune time to revitalize the “University College” brand and sub-brands by embodying our transformation through our name and brand. This may lead to a name change (University College to the [Donor Name] College of Professional and Continuing Education, College of Professional Learning, e.g.). Additionally, we will curate narratives and messages that emphasize our deep connections to and across the University of Denver.
   2. We will heighten awareness across the Rocky Mountain region by broadening our brand to reach current and transitioning Coloradoans with the message that University College offers access to the University of Denver—a top 100 university—through courses and credentials for adults of any age at any stage.

**Success Measures**

By December 31, 2022, University College will be the preeminent destination in the region, serving as the education partner for life by increasing the number of adult learners we serve by over 150% to at least 20,000 across the Rocky Mountain community and beyond. Adult learners will access the resources of the University through a suite of reimagined, market-predictive professional and continuing education offerings, and receive an unparalleled level of service, coaching, support, and instruction.

*In three years, we will:*

* Rebrand the college
* Accelerate our technology acquisition for face-to-face and online learning environments, and new community engagement and portfolio platforms to achieve an integrated and seamless student experience whether face-to-face, online, or in combination
* Launch the New Markets Team
* Assemble an exceptional Center for Professional Development staff that has built programming partnership with nearly every academic unit on campus to realize a budgeted annual revenue of $2,000,000
* Become a model of inclusive excellence for our students, staff, faculty, and alumni through programming, hiring, and evaluation practices that promote inclusive excellence
* Identify a place within the University campus plan for dedicated space to serve adult learners through round-the-clock utilization—classrooms that serve the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute during the weekdays; and University College Hyflex graduate and undergraduate courses, Enrichment Program courses, and Center for Professional Development courses in the evenings and on weekends
* Continue to invest in our instructional design and support staff to advance the field of teaching and learning for adult students through practice and research
* Secure necessary investments in our strategic plan from external, college, and DU sources

*In five years, we will:*

* Achieve all objectives
* Have a well-established network of partnerships with at least half of the other DU academic units in which we are helping them to meet the aspects of their strategic plans that involve delivering programming to the adult learner market
* Increase the number of adult learners we serve from 7,200 to at least 20,000 across ages and stages
  + *Note – The total number of students enrolled in credit offerings, including BA Completion Program, Graduate, and Certificates, is 1,700. The total number of students enrolled in non-credit offerings, including Enrichment Program, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and Center for Professional Development, is 5,500.*
* Increase revenue from $21M to at least $25M with greater diversification across programmatic offerings