President
Community College of Aurora
Aurora, Centennial, and Denver, Colorado

THE SEARCH

Community College of Aurora (CCA) seeks an innovative, community engaged, and mission-driven leader to serve as the institution's seventh President. CCA is the most diverse college in Colorado and provides high-quality instruction and robust student support services to 13,865 students on campuses in Aurora, Centennial, and Denver and online. The incoming President joins the institution on the heels of record enrollment growth, strategic investments in workforce-aligned programs and facilities, deepened community partnerships, and expanded advising and career supports for students. The President will be tasked with building upon the momentum of the BRAVE 2030 Strategic Plan, advancing institutional excellence and honoring CCA's open access mission.

CCA is a part of the 13-institution Colorado Community College System (CCCS or system). The college plays a significant role in providing access to education and opportunity to residents of southeast metro Denver, as well as students from across the state and was named as one of Time magazine's Best Community Colleges in 2027. CCA is *the* community's college and is both a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a Minority Serving Institution (MSI). The college offers 79 total programs including two bachelor's programs, 50 associate degrees, and 27 certificates. CCA's total headcount has increased by 28.6% since 2021, largely due to expansions in concurrent enrollment (dual high school and college enrolled students).

Reporting to the CCCS Chancellor, CCA's next president will work collaboratively with the other system colleges and presidents to provide high-quality, cost-effective education and training throughout the state. This leader will ensure CCA provides innovative academic offerings that align with real-world workforce needs and will cultivate community partnerships that allow students to integrate professional and experiential learning opportunities with classroom engagement. This leader will strategically invest in novel programs that meet the needs of today's learners and enhance student support services to meet the evolving needs of CCA students.

CCA remains poised for further growth, and the incoming President will continue improvements in operational excellence, including staff and faculty retention and alignment of internal systems,

spaces, and processes. The President will expand collaboration across the system as well as relationships with other educational institutions and community organizations to deepen student pathways, transfer opportunities, and concurrent enrollment activity. An accessible and welcoming leader, and a keen steward of financial resources, the President will serve as a compelling advocate for the college across the broader Denver metropolitan area, strengthening external partnerships and fostering philanthropic investment in support of its mission.

The Colorado Community College System and the Community College of Aurora have retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications will be treated confidentially and should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

The Colorado Community College System is Colorado's largest higher education and workforce training provider and champions low-cost and accessible education for everyone. With 13 colleges and more than 35 locations, CCCS serves over 130,000 students each year. Concurrent Enrollment, Career & Technical Education (CTE), certificate programs, transfer programs, associate and bachelor's degrees, one master's degree program, and customized employer training are offered across the system. CCCS is committed to improving students' lives, enriching communities, and building a skilled workforce to power Colorado's economy.

Over the last two years, Colorado has dedicated record levels of funding to workforce development initiatives. With an investment of over $65 million and a strategic partnership between the state and CCCS, the system's 13 colleges offer free training for students seeking in-demand jobs. These programs aim to train more than 20,000 Coloradans for high-skill careers while responding to the state's workforce shortages. Harnessing the momentum of the Together, We Will 2025-2030 Strategic Plan for the system, schools within CCCS reach students wherever they are, supporting their educational journeys. By harnessing the collective strengths of the 13 CCCS colleges, the system is transforming how Colorado experiences higher education, expanding opportunities, and empowering learners statewide and beyond.

Governance

CCCS is governed by the 12-member State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education. Ten board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. There is one board member for each U.S. congressional district, plus two at-large members. No more than six members may be from any single political party. They have staggered four-year terms. The remaining two seats on the board are held by a community college faculty member and a student representative who serve in non-voting capacities for one year each.

The System Chancellor, Dr. Marielena DeSanctis, reports to the Board. Each of the system's 13 presidents report to and are under the supervision of the System Chancellor. The Board has delegated to the College Presidents the authority for all personnel actions at their institutions, subject to Board Policies, System Procedures, and other pertinent laws, regulations and guidance.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF AURORA

Founded in 1983, the Community College of Aurora is a public, open access institution. CCA's service area includes Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver counties, and its student population reflects the broad diversity of the area. CCA is an HSI and an MSI and became the first community college in Colorado to join the Achieving the Dream Network in 2022. The college offers degrees and certificate programs for students seeking to enhance their current skill set, pursue employment, or transfer to a four-year college or university upon graduation.

CCA provides high-value instruction and support services to 13,865 learners, advancing educational attainment, workforce readiness, and upward socioeconomic mobility across the state. The college currently serves 9,201 concurrent enrollment learners through partnerships with 67 public and charter high schools, including Aurora Public Schools, Cherry Creek School District, and Denver Public Schools, CCA's three largest school district partners.

CCA has three vibrant campuses. The CentreTech Campus is CCA's launchpad, located in Aurora and offering essential student services like Enrollment, Admissions, Financial Aid, Testing, and Student Advocacy. It is also home to the new Center for Applied Science & Technology (CAST) Building, a 50,000 square foot dynamic hub for STEM, Skilled Trades, and in-demand career pathways in technology, diesel, construction, engineering, and business, making it the place where student goals take shape. CAST is the first new building on the CentreTech campus in nearly 20 years.

CCA's Centennial Campus for Healthcare and First Responders is located in the heart of Centennial and is home to the Health Science and Public Service programs, including Nursing, EMT, Paramedic, Fire Science, Behavioral Health, and Phlebotomy. Designed for hands-on, career-focused training, the campus offers on-site dining, student support services, and dedicated campus security, creating a safe, welcoming environment where students thrive from day one to graduation. This campus is home to over 20% of the Community College of Aurora Foundation's (CCAF) student scholars, many of whom are part of CCA's inaugural nursing cohort.

Located in Denver's Lowry neighborhood, Lowry Studios currently houses CCA's Cinematic Arts program, where students bring stories to life using industry-grade film equipment. With access to key campus services, student advocacy, and fresh vending options, Lowry offers a safe, inspiring space for creative exploration and growth. (This leased facility is an evolving capital asset; CCCS and CCA are working on a transition plan as the 145-acre Lowry Campus becomes available for redevelopment or reuse.)

Students, Faculty, and Staff

CCA students are passionate and hardworking. Seventy-four percent of CCA scholars are first generation students and 58% are Pell eligible. Students enroll in 79 bachelor's, associates, and certificate programs and 91% of students are employed in Colorado within one year of degree completion. Hailing from five continents and more than 60 countries, 37.9% of CCA students are Hispanic, 20.4% are African American, and 57% are female. CCA has worked hard to be a campus where everyone belongs, with comprehensive advising, mentorship, and student success supports. In Fall 2024, 61.9% of first-time, full-time degree seeking graduates were retained from their first to second year. 917 students enrolled in academic year 2023-2024 transferred to a four-year institution by Spring 2025. The median time to degree was three years in the 2024-2025 academic year. Due to strategic investment in advising and student support initiatives, fall-to-fall retention for all students improved to 47% during year one of the BRAVE 2030 strategic plan.

As of 2025, CCA had issued over 24,410 degrees, certificates, or diplomas. Alumni have gone on to accomplished careers in the region and far beyond, contributing their talents and skills in many industries. Over the years, students have studied at CCA and entered or re-entered the workforce with newly acquired skills, and thousands of these former students are now employed in the CCA service area, deepening CCA's economic impact in the state.

CCA is home to approximately 70 full-time faculty, 163 instructors, and 220 staff, all of whom are deeply committed to the academic and professional success of CCA's students, which fuels a distinctive esprit de corps throughout the institution. The college is dedicated to the recruitment, retention, and development of a diverse faculty and staff and seeks to reflect the diversity of the surrounding community and the students it serves. *The EDU Ledger* named CCA one of the 2026 Most Promising Places to Work in Community Colleges, recognizing CCA's demonstrated excellence in employee engagement, inclusive workplace culture, and institutional effectiveness.

Emerging Programs

Colorado is experiencing a critical need for behavioral health professionals. To help meet this workforce need, CCA has developed a behavioral health pathway consisting of five microcredentials that are offered as credit-bearing certificates and stack into two AAS degrees in behavioral health—one with an emphasis in mental health and social work and the other with a focus on addiction recovery. Learners who want to pursue further education can continue to earn a BAS degree in either mental health and wellness or addiction recovery.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in Behavioral Health degree is CCA's first bachelor's degree and was approved by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in March 2025. The new degree is designed to prepare students for careers in mental health services, addiction recovery, crisis intervention, and related behavioral health professions and graduate school pathways. It also provides a streamlined

pathway for students who earned degrees in Human Services, Psychology or similar programs to join the workforce.

CCA also recently launched an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing. The new Nursing Education Program will address regional nursing shortages by offering a full-time, 5–6 semester curriculum that prepares graduates to take the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN) and for employment as a registered nurse.

Building upon CCA's existing educator pathways, a Bachelor of Applied Science in Elementary Education degree is forthcoming. The HLC approved the new degree in 2026 and, pending final course approval, CCA students will have the opportunity to pursue the new degree as early as the spring 2027 semester.

CCA remains committed to its Cinematic Arts department and will begin offering stackable certificate pathways in the evolving film, media, and content-creation sectors in the spring 2027 semester.

These innovative academic, career, and technical programs integrate professional skills and experiential learning to ensure that students are well prepared for their next steps as they transition to four-year institutions or the workforce, marking a major milestone in CCA's commitment to meeting the needs of its students and the surrounding communities.

Key Partnerships

CCA remains firmly committed to four-year transfer pathways; the top five four-year transfer schools for CCA alumni include the University of Colorado Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, University of Denver, and Colorado State University. CCA also established a direct agreement with the Colorado School of the Mines (Mines) in May 2024. Students accepted to the Mines Academy at CCA earn an Associate of Engineering Science (AES) degree at CCA before moving on to Mines to complete a bachelor's degree. The new transfer program includes the opportunity to earn guaranteed admission to any four-year degree program at Mines With guidance and support from advisors, this program sets students up for success in pursuit of a STEM degree.

Through a partnership with Aurora Public Schools (APS), the Center for Applied Science & Technology (CAST) features a Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) program allowing high school students to work toward career pathway credits. The pathways build directly into program tracks at CCA, leading toward advanced credentials and associate degrees in STEM and high-growth industries.

In October 2026, construction began on a new health sciences high school launched in partnership between CCA, APS, and UCHealth. APS will open the magnet school in August 2027 with enrollment starting in November 2026. Once completed, the school will be the state's first health sciences

magnet high school. The high school will offer a specialized curriculum that prepares students for careers in healthcare and allied health. Unlike many selective health sciences high schools, it will have no GPA cutoff requirements and no entrance exam. Open to all, students will choose between pathways in nursing, behavioral health, medical imaging, surgical technology, and respiratory therapy. Students will participate in a variety of experiential learning activities with UCHealth, including workplace visits, job shadowing, simulations, and supervised clinical rotations.

The incoming President will work closely with the Community College of Aurora College Advisory Council, which acts as a strategic bridge between the college, local employers, government entities, and the community. Composed of nine leaders from local government, business, and educational backgrounds, the council advises CCA's President and the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education on the long-term educational needs of the area and promotes CCA's programs and services in the local community.

Financial Profile

CCA's total budget in fiscal year 2027 is $67M. The operating funds of the college come from two principal sources: CCCS state allocations and students' tuition and fees, of which resident tuition is $170 per credit hour for full-time students. Eligible Colorado residents receive a state-funded tuition discount of $116 per credit hour through the College Opportunity Fund (COF). In fiscal year 2027, 42% of the education and general budget came from state aid and 58% came from tuition and fees, with the balance coming from auxiliary sources and grants. Due to record enrollment growth, disciplined stewardship of resources, and the collective efforts of the entire college community, CCA is projected to finish the year with a $14.9 million fund balance.

Established in 1985, the Community College of Aurora Foundation (CCAF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization devoted to supporting the success of CCA in its commitment to student success and high-quality education. CCAF is led by a board of 16 community leaders and a staff of three. With annual fundraising of $2.5M and $6.88 million in assets, the foundation provides tremendous benefits to CCA, its faculty, and students and has helped the college achieve many of its key priorities. In the 2025-2026 academic year, CCAF awarded $1.37M in scholarships and emergency assistance to 651 students, and nearly three out of every four recipients were first generation college students.

In conjunction with CCA's current President, Dr. Mordecai Brownlee, the CCAF raised $42,130 from October 19-23, 2026, as Dr. Brownlee walked 71 miles of the High Line Canal trail during the second annual Miles With Mordecai fundraiser alongside students, donors, and community partners. The funds support student emergency assistance, helping to remove the most urgent financial barriers that can prevent students from completing their education.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

Reporting to CCCS Chancellor, Dr. Marielena DeSanctis, the incoming President of CCA will build upon existing institutional momentum, enrollment growth, and workforce-aligned programming to continue CCA's commitment to access, student success, and community impact. Direct reports to the President include the Vice Presidents for Academic Success, Operations and Chief Financial Officer, External Strategy and Chief of Staff, Enrollment Success and Completion, and Student Success along with the Chief Human Resource and Personnel Succes Officer, Chief Analytics and Institutional Excellence Officer, and the Executive Director of Strategic Communications and Special Initiatives.

CCA's President must be highly present: an authentic, accessible, engaged leader, connecting across campus with students, faculty, and staff and championing the access mission that deeply defines the college. Doubling down on CCA's existing culture of belonging, the President will lead with transparency and consistent communication. Equally visible and engaged in the broader community as a champion for CCA, the President will foster relationships with elected officials, industry partners, local nonprofit organizations, and advocacy groups and will play a significant external role in partnership-building and resource development.

The CCA President serves on the CCCS Presidents' Council and meets monthly with the Chancellor and the 12 other presidents within the system. It is vital that the President collaborate effectively with colleagues on the Presidents Council, working simultaneously to ensure support for CCA at the system and state levels and for the system's success as a whole, realizing the benefits of and being a contributing member to of CCCS.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

The incoming President will work to address the following opportunities and challenges at Community College of Aurora:

Provide strategic vision and entrepreneurial leadership for the Community College of Aurora

CCA seeks a leader who will inspire and motivate the community with a clear, compelling vision for the college that responds effectively to the challenges and opportunities impacting community colleges at this moment, uniquely in Colorado and broadly nationwide. Building upon the BRAVE 2030 strategic plan and guided by CCCS's Transforming Futures strategic plan for the system, the incoming President will reinforce CCA's commitment to excellence in student outcomes and academics, emphasizing wraparound support for students and bolstering a culture of belonging. Preserving CCA's current momentum and compelling trajectory, the new leader will assess where the college is today, understand what is working well, and identify where additional maturity or improvement is needed, and continue to strengthen the institution.

The President will provide leadership to strengthen existing student pathways, retention, and support services, and to grow enrollment and diversify student pipelines. Furthermore, the President will lead efforts to expand workforce-aligned programs and experiential learning opportunities while deepening community and industry partnerships. A systems thinker, the incoming President will steward operational processes, accountability, and communications, leveraging technology and data-informed decision making to maximize student outcomes and community impact.

Champion CCA's mission to advance educational attainment, workforce readiness, and upward socioeconomic mobility

Since its founding in 1983, CCA has maintained a deep commitment to access and community impact. CCA is the system's most diverse college, and in alignment with CCA's 2026 Equity Master Plan, the incoming President must ensure that the college remains an inclusive environment where all students belong and can thrive. As an HSI and MSI, it is imperative that the incoming President understand the distinction between enrolling and serving the population, ensuring that the whole student is welcomed, supported, and well-positioned for success. In partnership with the CCAF, the President will continue to enhance student support and scholarship funding, making strategic investments in systems and initiatives that promote equitable student outcomes.

Serve as a highly visible ambassador to the Greater Denver metro area, bringing a nuanced understanding of the political context

CCA is the community's college and maintains robust partnerships with a variety of educational, business, governmental, philanthropic, and community partners in the Greater Denver metro area. The incoming President must proactively work to position CCA as the partner of choice in the community, actively cultivating new prospective partners and stewarding robust existing external relationships, partnerships, and collaborations. A skillful storyteller and tireless advocate for the college, the incoming President will continue to articulate CCA's significant value-proposition for students, employers, and its financial impact for the state.

To be successful in this work, the President must be closely attuned to complex and evolving political context and funding structures within the State of Colorado and at the federal level, as well as ongoing transitions in oversight of higher education and workforce development at the state level, and how these changes impact CCA. This leader must have the flexibility to be both proactive and adaptable, able to navigate the interconnectedness of a public higher education system. The President will be able to bring about complex change for the college in a thoughtful manner and to implement solutions and establish best practices that are tailored to the unique needs of the institution.

Diversify enrollment streams and ensure that CCA is well positioned for continued growth

CCA has experienced record enrollment in recent years, primarily through increases in concurrent enrollment. The incoming President must be knowledgeable about higher education enrollment trends and innovative recruitment strategies and will maintain and build upon these efforts in other lanes, diversifying student pipelines and capturing a greater percentage of students who first encounter CCA through concurrent enrollment avenues. The President will also work to align staffing, ensuring that CCA's ambitious strategic vision can be sustainably fulfilled. A keen understanding of the dynamic landscapes in higher education, government, and the economy will be critical to leading CCA to ongoing success, supporting the purposeful allocation of limited resources to ensure the college's sustained viability.

In tandem, the President must ensure that CCA's systems and physical plant are prepared to properly serve a growing student body and meet workforce demand. This leader will partner with CCCS in navigating CCA's ongoing development initiatives, including the Lowry campus.

Generate and steward financial resources for CCA

Partnering closely with the CCAF, the President will continue to ensure that CCA remains accessible, continuing to offer affordable, high-quality education to the community. The President will build upon existing relationships with local governmental leaders and advocate for economic resources for the college. The President must work to marshal funding from a diversified range of sources and will advance fundraising efforts for CCA, leveraging philanthropy, corporate sponsorships, business partnerships, and foundation grants, as well as through the college's alumni network.

The President will thoughtfully steward internal resources and budget allocations, aligning staffing, systems, and structures to position the college for a sustainable financial future. This leader must navigate budget constraints, prioritize competing needs, identify efficiencies, and strategically invest resources to advance the institution's mission and student success.

Continually assess CCA's academic offerings to ensure alignment with workforce needs and student demand

CCA has built comprehensive academic program assessment mechanisms, working to ensure that the institution's academic offerings remain compelling to students and employers. The incoming President must build upon these efforts, remaining abreast of shifting enrollment and workforce trends and directing strategic investments towards programs that strengthen foundational knowledge and position students for successful career outcomes and community impact. In collaboration with CCA's College Advisory Council, the President will remain in close contact with local employers, government entities, and the community, ensuring that CCA's comprehensive curricular offerings remain responsive to the evolving workforce needs of the state.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Candidates should have strong evidence of many, if not all, of the following experiences, qualifications, and characteristics:

- An earned master's degree is required; an earned doctorate-level degree is preferred
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills; the ability to establish strong, meaningful relationships with a variety of constituencies, and the capacity to earn the trust and respect of internal and external stakeholders alike
- Demonstrated ability to provide forward-thinking, visionary leadership
- Proven ability to thoughtfully catalyze change and implement solutions that are tailed to the unique needs of an institution
- Outstanding record of effective management of and influence on people; demonstrated experience as a strategic and inclusive leader with the ability to build and empower strong teams, delegate responsibility, motivate others, and listen well
- Personal commitment to and record of success in advancing inclusive excellence; demonstrated experience advancing an organization that serves diverse constituencies and an appreciation for the unique needs of an HSI and MSI
- Demonstrated experience developing and managing complex institutional budgets in a resource-constrained environment, aligning financial resources with strategic priorities, and making sound fiscal decisions that support long-term institutional sustainability; appreciation of public finance and the realities of enrollment-driven budgets
- Strong appreciation and support of a culture of shared governance
- An entrepreneurial and innovative track record; proven ability to build and leverage external alliances and to develop strategic fundraising opportunities and workforce development partnerships
- Ability to serve effectively as the external face of an organization, building relationships within and outside the organization with government, business, community, and educational leaders
- Ability to bring campus constituencies to actionable consensus; the ability to build trust through transparency and to energize and inspire students, faculty, staff, alumni, advisory board members, and external stakeholders
- Proven experience creating shared goals and holding individuals and teams accountable; a track record of using data to inform decision-making

- Knowledge of current and emerging opportunities, challenges, trends, and strategies in community college and public higher education

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (including resumes and two- to three-page letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search. View the position and submit materials here.

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The Community College of Aurora prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment including those that violate federal and state law, or the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education Board Policies 3-120 and 4-120. The College does not discriminate on the basis of sex/gender, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion, genetic information, gender identity, or sexual orientation in its employment practices or educational programs and activities.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Community College of Aurora. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Community College of Aurora would supersede any conflicting information in this document.