

University of Denver

Advancing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at DU: A Portfolio of Interdisciplinary, Academic Fundraising Ideas

Introduction and Vision

The University of Denver will play a leading role in creating a world where everyone can thrive as their authentic selves, thus enhancing our individual and collective contributions. We are a university dedicated to the public good, and there is perhaps no greater public good to pursue than promoting equity and belonging. DU will pursue this goal by advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI), which Chancellor Jeremy Haefner has identified as a strategic imperative for the University. While advancing JEDI is an institutional responsibility, DU's history, current projects, geographic location, and extraordinary assets demonstrate that our University will take JEDI beyond fulfilling a responsibility to actively establishing this greater good.

Examining and acting on JEDI with attention to issues of justice will enable the University to consider the ways that systems and structures play a part in advancing equity for our collective future. Philanthropists will have an opportunity to partner with DU as we become a diverse and inclusive community; learn in partnership with and across disciplines, organizations, and communities; and share what we learn broadly and ensure that our students have the skills to shape their workplaces and communities into inclusive environments.

Investing in JEDI at DU will produce an almost immeasurable return for the university, higher education, and the world. Faculty, staff, student, and alumni commitment to JEDI is bursting with pockets of unrealized potential. We have an opportunity to further empower those in our community whose work is advancing JEDI, to create opportunities for expansion of such work, and to embed the ethos of JEDI in our University's curriculum and culture. This potential for impact through JEDI will be made exponentially stronger through philanthropic investment and the resulting downstream impacts of practices, policies, and institutions where everyone can fully participate—not only at DU but also within society as our alumni are agents for change within their communities and organizations.

Additionally, heightening the University's attention and action toward JEDI will foster a vibrant intellectual and educational environment, which will enhance the 4D Student Experience—a transformational initiative that combines curriculum, life skills, experiential learning, and immersion in the natural world to prepare students for lives and careers of purpose. The 4D Experience fosters: 1) Intellectual curiosity, thinking, and reasoning; 2) Professional identity, skills, and networking abilities; 3) Physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being; and 4) Character exploration, integrity, and respect for others. The skillsets that students build through JEDI initiatives will enhance their holistic 4D Experience and prepare them even more fully for life beyond college.

The following provides context for this commitment and a portfolio of interdisciplinary, academic strategies to advance JEDI at DU. The vision and strategies are grounded in DU's

academic mission and centered on making society more equitable. The ideas are both aspirational and authentic. We humbly propose them knowing that much more than what is proposed here will be necessary to achieve a vision for a more just and equitable university.

Making the Case for JEDI at DU

JEDI is foundational to the entire enterprise of higher education—from the mission statement to the board room, admissions and hiring, culture and belonging, student services, the classroom, the studio, and the lab. Creating a more equitable world means deeply understanding the systemic and systematic dynamics of injustice and acting definitively to realize a more equitable future through DU’s teaching, research, creative production, community engagement, as well as operational practices.

DU has long worked to address these injustices, from the Center for Multi-Cultural Excellence to the LatinX Center to the John Evans Study Committee. Various colleges and schools at DU advance initiatives to recruit more diverse faculty and provide scholarships to underrepresented populations. Teaching and training across majors and degrees pushes for deeper critical thinking and acting beyond one’s self through study abroad and community engagement. Faculty members chronicle history, study the issues, test interventions, advance policies, and inspire actions that address the foundations of racism, sexism, and prejudice.

DU is and will be a leader in JEDI systems change in higher education as well as in the larger society. From our responsibility to interrogate our complicated founder to our bold commitment to challenge our institutionalized prejudices and inadequacies, we have something other universities may not have in this work. We have the will, the expertise, and the forward momentum to do more and to do it better. We know that “good enough” is not good enough when it comes to access, opportunity, and realization of the potential of *all* humans. We know that we all can and must do better. We also know that the issues pertaining to human prejudice and discrimination are highly complex, and they deserve deep listening and contemplation as well as concerted action.

This proposal is about action—action that both increases the diversity of DU’s students, faculty, and staff and accelerates creation of critical knowledge, scholarship, and creative work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As we strive to increase JEDI across our University, we will both invest in the individuals who are already doing groundbreaking work in the field as well as build up opportunities for others to develop and lead in JEDI. We recognize the critical importance of balancing our internal commitments to JEDI – the efforts that will improve our campus community – with the influence that we aim to have on the world around us. DU will be a model in higher education of an institution that has applied JEDI practices across the entire institution, holding ourselves accountable to our values and serving our broader mission.

Strategic Investments

Listening sessions with faculty across the university have produced provocative, interdisciplinary priorities that can advance JEDI at DU. A unifying theme is that we must invest in our people—our students, faculty, and staff; they are DU. Below we identify a range of initiatives related to recruitment, belonging, and celebration that will maximize access and impact.

The faculty also clearly stated that we must invest in initiatives that provide infrastructure for engagement and action. Many of these initiatives demonstrate our collective responsibility to take action that creates positive outcomes for our future: dismantling systems of oppression and developing students who will help create a better world, in addition to creating new institutional structures for a new era. These proposed initiatives include existing interdisciplinary efforts that focus and catalyze action as well as possible nimble ways to leverage expertise in new directions.

Summary of Academic Investments to Advance JEDI

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Invest in People: Strategic Initiatives to Maximize Access and Impact

The University of Denver's people are our greatest assets, and we must build a welcoming and inclusive community with and for them. A successful implementation of this vision would result in previously underrepresented individuals not only being included in all aspects of University life, but also feeling a deep sense of belonging at DU. We have an opportunity to recognize the diversity of experiences, mindsets, and paths to DU among people who represent underrepresented, historically excluded, or marginalized, intersecting identities.

Given systemic discrimination, we must take intentional action to heighten access to opportunity. For example, Admissions can partner strategically with high schools, colleges, and communities; scholarships can increase representation across disciplines; recruitment and hiring practices can help to remove bias and secure amazing talent; and endowed professorships can recognize and retain diverse scholars. DU can do all this and more through investment.

University-wide JEDI Student Initiative. What if DU set an audacious goal as part of the campaign to have its colleges and schools reflect the US demographic profile by 2030? That goal is achievable through investments in recruitment, scholarships, and supportive efforts related to belonging.

Admissions starts with recruitment, and any scholarship initiative must also address investments in recruitment. Undergraduate admissions as well as graduate admissions in some units invest in recruitment strategies to increase applications and yield among underrepresented groups. We propose establishing this practice across the university, such that DU approaches recruitment more holistically, supporting best practices across the schools and colleges.

We have an opportunity to weave JEDI considerations and intentional inclusivity in all our recruitment. When all our audiences – not just underrepresented ones – understand our commitment to inclusivity, our culture can shift in a way that JEDI becomes a priority for all. Philanthropy can help accelerate this work through creation of a staff position and a plan to maximize recruitment practices and partnerships.

As for recruiting a more diverse pool of students, we propose a university-wide scholarship initiative focused on historically marginalized groups. The scholarships would be available to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. There are many ways the scholarships could be focused and structured, though we suggest a priority on merit-based awards.

From applications to matriculation to belonging, we must invest in all three to achieve our vision of JEDI excellence across the continuum of student experience. As for belonging, we propose learning more from student life and the respective schools and colleges about the challenges that are faced by historically underrepresented groups, what is already being done to address these challenges, and how the gap can be closed very quickly. For example, the initiative to reduce time to degree completion suggests that more investments need to be made into campus life (e.g., affinity groups) and advising. More diverse staff who provide focused, culturally responsive support in these areas could ensure that underrepresented students are more likely to stay.

JEDI-Focused Academic Fellowships. Related to recruitment and belonging are the learning and growth opportunities that students have while they are at DU. We propose that students be eligible for paid internships, research assistantships, and teaching assistantships that focus on JEDI-related topics and interests. These competitive fellowships, made possible through philanthropy, would be available directly to students as well as to faculty and staff who can offer positions to students through their scholarship, labs, and institutes and centers. We propose that the fellowships be available year-round, including the summer months when it can be particularly hard for students to cover living costs. Additionally, the fact that these internships and assistantships are paid automatically opens the door of opportunity for more individuals of varying socioeconomic backgrounds – not just those who could afford similar internships that are unpaid.

We also propose a new academic fellowship program whereby select students are eligible to complete interdisciplinary projects focused on JEDI in the community. The students would be paid for their consulting work, while also earning academic credit. This new initiative would require curricular approval; several schools and colleges have already expressed interest. As an annual cohort, the students—across projects, schools, and colleges—would be expected to complete learning experiences together beyond the projects. A program of this nature could be a distinctive academic initiative for DU, not only drawing potential students to DU but also contributing to DU's public good mission and graduating alumni with the skills necessary to

enact inclusive change within the corporate, public, and nonprofit sectors where they are employed.

These JEDI-focused academic fellowships could be celebrated each year through a showcase of the work being accomplished during the annual JEDI conference. This initiative would financially support our students, and it would also connect students and efforts across the university, reinforcing a sense of community and creating additional opportunities to learn with and from each other.

JEDI Doctoral Scholars Program. We propose a pre-doctoral scholars program whereby DU hosts doctoral diversity dissertation fellows from other universities, providing a salary/stipend for the year, as they complete their dissertations. This program could be an initiative of the provost's office, coordinated by the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (OEDI), and in partnership with the library and the schools and colleges.

The program would provide a modest stipend along with faculty mentorship and access to DU's academic and library resources. Such a prestigious award would draw potential faculty candidates to DU, while also raising the profile of DU as committed to faculty diversity and success. The University's high-level commitment to Diversity Dissertation Fellows would enable placement across the schools and colleges. These fellows would have a minimal teaching load, support to finish the dissertation, and opportunities to present and connect with the university community. This initiative would heighten the awareness and influence of JEDI work across the university in addition to raising the university's profile among our peer institutions because of this work as well as increasing partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities HBCU, Hispanic-serving institutions, community colleges, and other higher education institutions.

Faculty JEDI Cluster Hiring. Recent DU faculty hiring demonstrates that schools and colleges are working to diversify their faculty. For example, according to the provost's office, over 60% of new faculty hired in 2020-21 were from underrepresented groups. We propose that this effort be focused and amplified across the university and across all faculty lines. Multiple universities and peer institutions have launched target of opportunity (TOP) hiring or cluster hiring in recent years to accelerate the diversity of their faculty in particular substantive areas or initiatives.

Given the range of disciplines and initiatives at DU, we recommend a JEDI cluster hiring initiative that focuses on hiring faculty from under-represented groups regardless of their area of focus. This helps to create mutually supportive communities of colleagues across disciplines as well as across schools and colleges – engaging the full university community in our commitment to JEDI. For example, each year, the openings for that year could focus on hiring a cluster of faculty members who would then start at the same time. This initiative could also maximize IRISE and the paired recruitment of post-doctoral scholars who then transition into faculty positions.

To make substantial progress in faculty diversity and to build out systems for success and belonging, we propose that the cluster hiring be paired with a target of opportunity initiative such that senior faculty are recruited into tenured positions. The latter demands substantial central

investment. Recruiting accomplished faculty requires hiring packages that support the smooth continuation of their scholarship and creative works. These should be new positions allocated to the schools and colleges with commensurate discipline-based benefits.

The multiple positive effects of diverse faculty recruitment cannot be overstated for the entire campus, particularly for students from underrepresented groups. Paired cluster and TOP hiring can help to build connection and belonging within and across the faculty. We must also invest in recruitment, including anti-racist practices during hiring, as well as support for new faculty from onboarding to community building. Central staff and unit-based staff and faculty time would be necessary for these initiatives to be done well. It is worth noting that ODEI is working to establish a position to focus on faculty and staff hiring. Again, if we are going to succeed in our vision for JEDI at DU, we must be better.

JEDI Developmental Funds. We propose a centralized fund that awards faculty and staff for integrating JEDI into teaching and research via small grants. We also propose a centralized fund for professional development, so that those faculty and staff who seek additional JEDI-related training in higher education or their respective fields receive financial support. Related to this last point, some fields have JEDI-focused affinity groups that are separate from their main societies. Having developmental funds available for conference travel and the like would incentivize and reward their participation.

Rewarding Contributions to Advance JEDI at DU. Important conversations have begun at DU in recent years, fueled by the pandemic, regarding the hidden labor of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups. Again, DU's public naming of these inequities demonstrates our power and potential. Now we must act to correct them. Quite obviously, compositional diversity hiring initiatives will help those who are underrepresented become more represented. However, we need action for our people now.

We propose an initiative to identify types and forms of contribution that are disproportionately performed by staff and faculty members from historically underrepresented groups, e.g., student advising, faculty mentoring, committee membership, etc. From this, we propose that the workload be redressed, or otherwise, that staff and faculty are paid for this additional work.

Invest in the Infrastructure for Engagement and Action related to JEDI

Across higher education and at DU, scholarly JEDI efforts can be organized in diverse ways. Whether they are called centers, institutes, or labs, they may focus solely on research or have a more comprehensive charge to also teach and engage the community. The benefits of such organizational forms are that they leverage expertise across schools and disciplines, thus, doing more together to advance scholarship and impact than any single discipline can do alone. The following captures existing initiatives at DU and proposes new, nimble academic structures for students, faculty, and staff engagement and action related to JEDI.

Existing Centers, Institutes, and Interdisciplinary Programs. Multiple high-impact initiatives at DU already mobilize faculty, staff, and students; maximize academic strengths; and provide leadership to the community and within respective fields. Whether they be organized as centers, institutes, labs, or programs, one aspect is constant across them: additional resources will

catalyze and accelerate their work and impact. Leaders associated with these efforts have made clear that DU can amplify their programs to the next level of possibility by raising funding for core aspects of the work.

The table below lists current JEDI initiatives that are past the proof of concept. They are successful in both their engagement and their action. While this is not an exhaustive list of existing, central initiatives related to JEDI, these have wide-spread faculty involvement, and they have financial sustainability and are ready to amplify academic impact.

The range of philanthropic priorities and possibilities include initiative leadership, faculty affiliates, research support, support for students, core staffing, and special initiatives that distinguish the efforts, e.g., visiting scholars, conferences, or community-engaged projects. Of note are how the various human capital and operational needs of these initiatives relate to the strategies discussed above about investing in people. When these investment strategies—people and initiatives—are advanced simultaneously, the impacts are accelerated and multiplicative.

Each of these existing efforts noted the critical importance of the library and library services for their academic success. To that end, we envision a philanthropic initiative that is focused exclusively on JEDI of academic resources. While this can and should include collections, it also includes access to publications and people to contextualize and support that access, such as librarians knowledgeable about various subjects like critical race theory. Broader support for the University Archives, including an endowed University Archivist, would allow for more critical attention to be paid to JEDI in documenting the history of the University and in using the archives as a tool for teaching about that history.

Existing, Interdisciplinary JEDI Initiatives and Related Philanthropic Priorities

	Leadership (e.g., endowed chairs, director grants, etc.)	Faculty Affiliates (e.g., stipends, fellowships, etc.)	Research Incentives (e.g., small grants)	Support for Undergraduate and Graduate Students (e.g., TA, RA, fellowships, etc.)	Core Staffing	Special Initiatives (e.g., visiting scholars, conferences, community- engaged projects, etc.)
IRISE	X	X	X			X
LatinX Center	X	X	X	X		
Black Experience Office	X					
Native and Indigenous Faculty Initiative		X	X	X		X
Center for Immigration and Policy Research			X	X	X	
Disability Studies Program Office		X		X	X	

Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Program		X		X		
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New Academic and Scholarly Initiatives in JEDI. Programming in higher education can be academic, co-curricular, or just part of the culture of the place through rituals of remembrance, critique, service, and celebration. What depths of expertise at DU have yet to be fully maximized? Imagine academic possibilities for majors and degrees in JEDI-related topics or new research applied to specific industries or sciences as well as specific populations. Investments in faculty to pursue substantive focus areas would ensure DU continues to differentiate and excel, being sought after by students, scholars, and the public alike.

At the same time, the typical interdisciplinary faculty centers and institutes can be expensive to launch and maintain, yet infrastructure is necessary to support JEDI-related scholarship. We propose that new academic interdisciplinary JEDI initiatives have a base of central support and a central incubation infrastructure. This will enable faculty to focus on turning the ideas to action and not on the structure of the effort. The availability of these central resources can remove some of the barriers to thinking about these interdisciplinary JEDI efforts as singular in focus and requiring sustained financial support in perpetuity.

We envision a central JEDI fund to support substantial projects. Imagine \$50,000 to \$100,000 in annual or multi-year awards that enable competitive applications to move interdisciplinary ideas to action. These JEDI clusters could focus on substantive areas that require a JEDI lens applied to the history, issue, and possibilities. Examples include JEDI and the carceral system or JEDI and artificial intelligence. The collaborating faculty group could apply the funds to conduct pilot research, engage the community, host a conference, co-author a book, pilot a new interdisciplinary course, etc. The central infrastructure support could come in the way of staff time to help organize meetings, communicate about the effort, research funding, etc.

Numerous ideas in this initiative would hold the potential of involving community partners, thus having immediate community impact and demonstrating DU's dedication to the public good. Each of these projects would emerge from faculty members' passion and expertise, grounding the initiative in authenticity. In this way, they would provide the unique DU perspective and value to JEDI initiatives.

The point here is to create a nimble response structure that invests in faculty ideas. Such a structure could unleash faculty creativity and move it to action more quickly, while producing knowledge that benefits society.

Types and Levels of Investments

Per guidance from Vice Chancellor Val Otten, we will get feedback on the overall draft and then further workshop each priority idea to determine actual dollars needed.

1. What budget and resources are required to fully fund the initiative and enable full achievement of the program's bold vision over the next 5-10 years?
2. How does the budget break down into annual and endowment opportunities?

3. How much of the budget must be raised (both immediate cash needs and opportunity for deferred gifts) to launch the initiative? How much must be raised to sustain it?

Faculty and Administrative Representatives: JEDI Interdisciplinary Fundraising Initiative

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*****PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT**

THE PHILANTHROPIC PLAN OF DU'S OFFICE OF DIVERISTY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION***