

**The Case for Equity  
at the  
University of Colorado-Boulder**

**Presented by  
The Black and Gold Project Foundation**

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## Preface

*“The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) was founded in 1876, five months before Colorado became a state. It is the Flagship University of the University of Colorado system.*

*“The core public mission is centered on the belonging, well-being, and success of our undergraduate and graduate students. CU offers a world-class faculty and staff who deliver high-impact learning opportunities, hundreds of co-curricular programs, strong alumni career achievement and a caring, holistic community of support—all situated within one of the most inspiring college campuses and most innovative, educated, and sustainable communities in the world.*

*“We share a common desire to continuously improve, and are driven to become a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist university. We have hard work to do to make the progress we must achieve, and we seek the commitment and engagement of everyone at CU-Boulder to help us build the practice of inclusion into the daily life of our campus.*

*“We are focused on supporting and enabling all who are driven to make a difference—and our faculty, staff and alumni share a proud ... history of advancing and sustaining the public good.”*

*Source: The University of Colorado*

*Presented by The Black and Gold Project Foundation Board of Directors: James Michael Brodie, Holly Olivarez, Prince Holley, Emma Sembly-Brodie, Marlene Price, Walter Blake, and Hazel Dew.*

*Special thanks and acknowledgements: Lionel Lyles, (Ph.D., University of Colorado) for his guidance; Richard Jessor, (Ph.D., Ohio State University) for his groundbreaking report, “Equality of Educational Opportunity and the University of Colorado: A Report to the Faculty Council by the Faculty Council Committee on Minority Programs,” which serves as the inspiration for our work.*

## Abstract

Since the University of Colorado-Boulder's inception in 1876, the university has established itself in many ways as a leader in high-quality education, professional training, public service, research, and state of the art healthcare.

But its commitment to the educating of all qualified students, regardless of where they came from, or the depth of their parents' purses, has long fallen short of the institution's stated mission and vision. CU-Boulder has historically left out large segments of the population, both statewide and nationally, creating an academic environment based more on cultural preference than on intellectual excellence.

This has been particularly the case when it comes to the enrollment, retention, and graduation of African Americans as students, as well as in the hiring of African American professionals.

To reverse these anemic historical trends, the University must intentionally implement a sustained recruitment policy of eligible populations in Colorado and nationwide.

The Black and Gold Project Foundation (which consists of CU-Boulder alumni, current students, as well as friends and supporters) is very concerned about the demonstrated and inadequate efforts that the CU-Boulder administrative and academic leadership teams have undertaken to increase the number of African American students and faculty at all levels of engagement.

Therefore, to rectify this paucity, we present the following Action Plan as a guide to the administrative leadership of the CU-Boulder. Our focus is on making a fundamental shift in the institution's philosophical and practical approach to excellence in Academe.

It is noted that the University's Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics Plan (effective 2019) is the latest in a long line of diversity directives presented over the past half century which portend to cultivate success for a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body by expanding financial resources, academic programming, and services. These recommendations have not come to fruition.

The Black and Gold Project Foundation exists to add substance to the University of Colorado's stated intentions by pushing CU generally, and the Boulder campus specifically, to honor its commitment to African American students, faculty, staff, and administrators in all areas of the University of Colorado ecosystem.

Our plan recommends the following:

1. Dramatically increasing the financial commitment to African American students.
2. Hiring dedicated staff to coordinate services that support African Americans who request assistance.
3. Developing a deeper retention infrastructure capable of effectively supporting African American students to progress through their chosen fields of study.
4. Developing dedicated academic sections in the library system on Africana/Black Studies for browsing and research.
5. Increasing CU-Boulder's visibility in elementary, secondary, and high schools in Colorado and the nation.
6. Developing reciprocal relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
7. Re-energizing partnerships with Black alumni and other interested parties focused on a reimagining of African American life on the Boulder campus.

## **The Issue: A History of Exclusion**

Note: As of this printing, the percentage of African Americans enrolled at the CU-Boulder campus (2 percent of the overall student population) has not changed over the past decade, according to the latest figures released by the University of Colorado, making this the only non-White American cohort that showed zero results. Note that the percentage of International students also remained the same at 7 percent.

CU-Boulder has a long and consistent history of exclusionary practices regarding African American students.

In 1918, the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Colorado, Lucile Berkeley Buchanan, was prevented from walking across the stage to receive her undergraduate degree with the White members of her graduating class. Only in 2018 was her accomplishment acknowledged with a much-delayed posthumous recognition, thanks to the efforts of Polly E. Bugros McLean, Ph.D., associate professor in the College of Media, Communication and Information at CU-Boulder.

In 1946, Zipporah Parks Hammond became the first African American woman to earn a bachelor's degree from CU-Boulder's School of Nursing. As the only African American in a class of 30 women, she and Japanese nursing students were segregated into housing away from their White peers.

Up to and including the 1960s, African American male students were barred from living in the campus dormitories. Local African American families often boarded these students well into the 1970s and 1980s, giving them safe and supportive places to live and study.

In 1977, a diverse group of African American, Latino, Native American, Asian, and White CU students occupied the Hellems Arts and Sciences Building in response to the CU Board of Regents' plan to eliminate the Educational Opportunity Program, which made possible the education of those students.

The early 1970s were a "high-water mark" in African American enrollment, due to activism that called for increased inclusion, and a commitment by CU-Boulder leadership to change its course. However, since then, the number of African American undergraduate and graduate students has progressively declined on the Boulder campus.

African American enrollment CU-Boulder declined from roughly 700 students roughly a half century ago on a campus of 19,000, to as few as 300 in the 1990s on a campus with an otherwise steadily growing general population, to the fewer than 600 documented at the close of the 2021-2022 academic year. Given those figures, African American students comprise 1 percent of the entire student body of more than 37,000 students.

Further, over the past half century, CU-Boulder has neither encouraged nor demonstrated that it values the inclusion of significant numbers of African Americans within its academic hierarchy, as indicated by 1.6 percent of faculty. Simultaneously, however, there is, and has been, a concentration of African Americans on the Colorado Buffaloes' football team. At 70 percent, no such concentration exists across academic programs at any level or division.

In 2019, Lauren Jade Arnold, then a graduate MFA student, penned an op-ed in the *Denver Post* titled "Black students have suffered racism at CU-Boulder for decades. Do you believe us now?"

Her commentary came in response to a video of a White woman shouting the N-word at African American CU-Boulder students in the Engineering School.

"After you watched it, how did you feel? Were you shocked? Appalled? Defensive? Did you feel sympathy?" Arnold wrote. "When we watched it, we were angered but unsurprised. For us, this video has brought back memories, both distant and recent, of the racism we've endured on campus at CU-Boulder. I remembered that hateful word being used casually by non-black students. Others have had it spat at them by white students or seen it written on campus walls."

With the exception of the Black Educational Opportunity Program, which was operational from 1968 to the 1990s, there have been no sustained venues for ethnic cultural exchange throughout the University proper. This only changed recently with the opening of the Center for African & African American Studies, located in the Mackey building, founded, and directed by Professor Reiland Rabaka, Ph.D.

The CAAAS exists in a world in which conservative-leaning Americans have rejected the impact of higher learning in the United States, while demonizing the study of race and racism in Academe. There is a particular focus on The 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory. While both explore the role that race has played in the establishment of laws and customs, Critical Race Theory is taught in law schools and nowhere else. The Pulitzer Prize-winning 1619 Project explores how the role slavery and the contributions of African Americans have impacted American society.

At the time of publishing this white paper, more than 35 states have introduced measures to ban CRT and 1619 Project teachings in K to 12 classrooms. Several universities have also attempted to ban the curriculum, including the University of Colorado, whose Board of Regents narrowly rejected the ban in the fall of 2021.

A recent study sheds light on how the flagship campus for the State of Colorado arrived at its current, racially homogenous configuration.

An April 4, 2018, *New York Times* article, "Colleges Recruit at Richer, Whiter High Schools," noted the discrepancy between what is stated as policy at majority-White universities and what turns out to be the practice in college recruitment. UCLA professor Ozan Jaquette, Ph.D., and University of Arizona professor Karina G. Salazar, Ph.D., debunked the argument that many majority-White colleges give for not recruiting African American scholars: that those students lack the aptitude and credentials to qualify for admission.

Instead, what Jaquette and Salazar found was that colleges such as the CU-Boulder (included in the study) sought students from high schools in more affluent and White neighborhoods while ignoring more academically talented students in less affluent, less White areas. The study specifically cited the CU-Boulder's recruiting practices as one example.

CU representatives recruited students from Boston's Dover-Sherborn Regional High School, (88 percent White, with about one 150 students with proficient math scores, according to the U.S. Department of Education). But the University made no such recruitment arrangements for nearby Brockton High School (roughly 80 percent Black, with about 620 students meeting or exceeding those same math standards).

Roger Pielke Jr., Ph.D., professor of Environmental Studies at CU-Boulder, began his teaching career in Boulder in 2001. Over that time, he has been keenly aware of the lack of non-White students in his classes.

“I had almost no Black students in them,” wrote Dr. Pielke, in his October 2021 blog post, “Why is the University of Colorado Boulder so White?”

In that post, Dr. Pielke cited a 2020 report in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, which pointed to the intentional nature of CU-Boulder’s recruitment practices. The report revealed that 8.2 percent of CU-Boulder’s undergraduates originated from one-percenter families, those at the very top of the income category.

Meanwhile, according to the report, 41.4 percent are students whose parents fall in the upper 10 percent of all earners. The data places the Boulder campus as first among all public universities for its proportion of undergraduate students from the top 1 percent.

“Despite various initiatives, lofty goals and frequent statements of the importance of diversity from administrators, that remains the case today,” Dr. Pielke wrote. “CU Boulder is one of the least diverse and most inaccessible campuses among universities in the nation. That’s a problem.”

Other examples abound.

At the November 2018 CU Diversity Summit in Boulder, an administrator in Strategic Relations stated that several majority African American high schools around the United States have asked that the University of Colorado not visit/recruit their students who, while qualified, lacked the financial resources needed to enroll at Boulder.

When a written inquiry was made to the CU Administration to identify “suitable schools/high school students” per the Admissions Office’s “Do Not Visit” list, there was no response.

In addition, there exists a noticeable shortfall in the employment of African Americans, people who have the doctoral credentials required to be employed in academic staff positions within Academe at CU-Boulder.

The numbers are not much better for tenured faculty at CU-Boulder.

Author and researcher Jamal Simmons noted just how consistently low African American inclusion is in academia, in business, in the military, and in all other sectors of American life. He found that while the numbers may vary by a point or two in either direction, the organizational modal rate of African American participation in leadership, the one that appeared most often in the data, was roughly 4 percent.

Simmons argued that there appears to be the comfort level for Whites when it comes to African American inclusion in the ranks.

“A 4 percent Black participation rate in America’s leadership cohort is not diverse enough to successfully tackle systemic racism,” Simmons wrote in the 2021 issue of the *Democracy Journal*. “I’ve learned that putting the right rules in place is important. But having the right rule-makers is critical.”

As a graduate student at Harvard University in the mid-1990s, Simmons and other students pushed the university to add African American tenured faculty at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, as there were none. A quarter century later, there were two out of 55 faculty (or 3.6 percent).

University-wide, he pointed out, only 4.5 percent of all Harvard faculty were African American (3.5 percent of them tenured) and 4.4 percent of administrators.

The numbers are similar at other institutions. Just 3.7 percent of tenured faculty at Yale University are African American, 4.3 percent at the University of Virginia, 4.1 percent at the University of Michigan, 4 percent at the University of Texas-Austin, 3.5 percent at Duke University, 3.5 percent at the University of California-Berkeley, 3.2 percent at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and less than 3 percent at the University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and Stanford University.

The numbers at the University of Colorado-Boulder are even worse. Here, African Americans account for only 1.64 percent of all tenured faculty.

These sharp disparities have driven a significant number of African American students to seek a post-secondary education at other universities within Colorado or leave the state altogether to obtain higher education degrees.

If the University intends to reach its highest potential by preparing the minds of today to solve the problems of tomorrow, it must immediately act to hire qualified personnel from more diverse segments of American society.

The University must also intentionally implement a sustained recruitment policy for African American scholars within Colorado and nationwide, just as it does for African American athletes.

Toward this end, the Black and Gold Project Foundation, which consists of a number of graduates of the University of Colorado-Boulder, current students, as well as friends and supporters, is very concerned about the ineffectiveness that the administrative and academic leadership teams of the CU-Boulder have demonstrated regarding the implementation of any plan to increase the number of African American students and faculty at all levels of study.

To rectify the paucity of African American faculty and students, the following Action Plan is provided to guide and support the administrative leadership of CU-Boulder toward a revolutionary change aimed at faculty and student diversification at all levels of academic pursuit.

## **Attempts at Solutions: A Legacy of Plans**

The past 50 years have seen numerous diversity reports, white papers, plans, and strategies.

In 1970, professors Richard Jessor, Ph.D., Delmos Jones, Ph.D., Julius London, Ph.D., Salvador Ramirez, Ph.D., and Charles Nilon, Ph.D. (uncredited) presented the “Equality of Educational Opportunity and the University of Colorado: A Report to the Faculty Council by the Faculty Council Committee on Minority Programs.”

The document came to be known simply as “The Jessor Report.”

In their report, the professors stated that “a bleak fact about higher education has become more and more widely recognized. That fact is access to colleges and universities has been open only in a token sense to youth who belong to America’s main minority groups.”

While the Jessor Report also addressed higher education disparities faced by Latinos and Native Americans, the conversation in this paper is specifically focused on African Americans.

The report cited a survey of the predominantly White state universities and land-grant colleges, finding that fewer than 2 percent of their students, undergraduate or graduate, were African American: this while African Americans accounted for roughly 11 percent of the US population. That survey further noted that “in 1968 there were more foreign students than American Negroes in our colleges and universities.”

The authors noted: “that state support for higher education in Colorado is already inadequate. To the extent that the Governor and the State Legislature continue this stance, increased minority enrollment becomes nothing more than a vague hope. One reason for the lengthy development of this report has been to make the need for increased minority enrollment amply clear; if that aim has been achieved, it should follow that the state must assume its inherent obligation to provide the necessary financial support. We recommend that the Faculty Council take every action possible to see that state funding is provided.”

The Jessor Report continued: “If, for whatever reason, adequate financial support is not forthcoming, we recommend a re-ordering of existing budgetary priorities within the University to enable significant progress in minority enrollment. Such re-ordering of priorities will obviously meet resistance and generate strain and frustration. Nevertheless, an unwillingness to pursue this approach, if other avenues have been closed, would be tantamount to rejecting the importance of equal educational opportunity at CU. In our view, this would be an error of the utmost seriousness.”

The authors also challenged the notion that students of color were, by definition, “at risk” and not as capable as their White contemporaries.

They wrote: “Beyond emphasizing the inadequacies of the criteria on which ‘high risk’ classification is based, we want to stress another point. The responsibility of a state institution is to educate its youth, to improve their performance, and to do this for all those who can benefit from exposure to university life; it is not merely to select only those with an already-guaranteed potential of succeeding.”

At CU, according to the report, the initial group of 78 “high risk” students were admitted to the first summer program in 1968 as part of the Educational Opportunity Program, under the direction of Dr. Nilon. Sixty remained in school through Spring Semester. Of these 60, 49 were eligible to continue in the fall of 1969, and 11 were able to petition to remain.

According to the report, “This survival rate is a little better than that of the ordinary population.”

For the duration of the EOP Program, led by Director William Pitts, and followed by Director Daniel Raybon, the graduation rate of African American students was higher than 60 percent, greater than the graduation rate of “mainstream” students.

The Jessor Report pointed to similar successes at the University of California-Berkeley and at the City University of New York, with the latter drawing this conclusion: “The best way of determining whether a potential student is capable of college work is to admit [them] to college and evaluate [their] performance there.”

CU's next major diversity plan, *A Blueprint for Action*, was drafted in 1998. The plan was meant to bring a comprehensive "bottom-up" approach to equity. The Office of Diversity and Equity was created to measure "day-to-day diversity efforts.

The plan's focus was three-fold, involving "Learning, and Work," "Student Access and Opportunity," and "Diverse Faculty and Staff." The goal was to "establish or enhance systems for generating feedback from students, faculty, and staff about the status of the campus climate; utilize survey information in formulating future strategies."

The remaining goals focused primarily on increasing admission, retention, and graduation rates for minority students in the undergraduate and graduate programs and increasing the number of minority and female tenured and tenure-track faculty, along with university and classified staff.

During the 1990s, the Black student population was at its lowest level (fewer than 400) since the 1960s. The numbers during the early 2000s were not much better.

During his brief tenure (2019 to 2021), former CU President Mark Kennedy introduced Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Grants. The modest \$6,000 (maximum) awards were supposed to spur "innovative and creative projects that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the University of Colorado."

Grants were open to faculty, staff, students, and student groups interested in submitting proposals. A system-wide selection committee, made up of faculty and staff from each campus, was supposed to review the proposals and rate them based on certain criteria. Documentation regarding grant recipients, and any impact they made, was not available at the time of this report.

The most recent effort at diversification is the *Inclusion, Diversity and Excellence in Academics* Plan, known as the IDEA Plan, introduced in 2018 and launched in 2019.

The IDEA Plan aims to create programs that support underserved populations, and to eliminate barriers to access and success, hiring and retaining diverse faculty and staff, and recruiting, retaining, and graduating students who reflect the state of Colorado, the nation, and the global community the University serves.

The IDEA Plan, like all other efforts after the Jessor Report (which proposed to increase the African American student population to four percent) contains no measurables, with the exception of a \$5,000 award to White rural students.

Over the past 50 years only one CU diversity plan, The Jessor Report, has included measurable data, rendering the others as little more than “all deliberate speed” models. They looked good on paper but offered almost nothing in the way of real impact.

As stated earlier, currently African American undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at the CU-Boulder comprise about 1 percent of the overall student population on a campus of more than 37,000 students. Meanwhile, there is a near 100 percent chance to encounter more African American students on the Colorado Buffaloes athletic teams than in any academic department on the CU-Boulder campus.

Based on the NCAA’s own figures, at the predominantly White institutions that comprise the Power Five football conferences, as of the 2019-2020 season, African American students comprised only 5.7 percent of the overall student populations on those campuses. Yet, in those same schools, African American athletes made up 55.9 percent of men’s basketball players, 55.7 percent of men’s football players, and 48.1 percent of women’s basketball players.

At CU-Boulder, the percentages are even more jarring. Based on CU’s most recent data, African American athletes comprise as much as 70 percent of the football program and more than 60 percent of the men’s and women’s basketball programs. No such concentration exists in any academic program on the CU-Boulder campus.

Numerous American colleges, including CU-Boulder, have repeatedly recruited students from high schools in more affluent and White neighborhoods, while ignoring more academically talented African American students, particularly those in less affluent areas. The exception to this trend is in the concentration of African Americans in various athletic programs at those same institutions.

This policy is a clear denial of valuable intellectual talent and is inconsistent with the University's vision and mission statements. Given this current status, CU-Boulder will not remain competitive on the world stage. Therefore, what is required is an equity policy that yields measurable results.

## **A Plan of Action**

***Goal A: To substantially increase the number of African American students enrolled in all academic departments on the University of Colorado-Boulder campus.***

### **Objective 1**

To increase enrollment of African American students, from less than 600 to 5,000 by the beginning of the 2025 Academic School Year (Increase enrollment to 2,500 new students in 2024 with an additional 2,500 in 2025 for a total of 5,000 in 2025.)

### **Objective 2**

To increase CU-Boulder's visibility in elementary, secondary, and high schools in Colorado and the nation by developing social media platforms that are user friendly to all students in grades K to 12.

### **Objective 3**

To develop outreach programs that inform African American middle and high school students in Colorado and nationally that CU-Boulder is seriously interested in recruiting. This requires targeted recruitment of students at high-achieving high schools (inner-city schools, rural schools, charter schools, and home school populations) that have been previously ignored.

### **Objective 4**

To develop relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to enrich the academic experiences of faculty and students, creating a pool of graduate student applicants for both CU-Boulder and the HBCUs.

## A Plan of Action

***Goal B: To develop a retention infrastructure capable of effectively supporting African American students to progress through their chosen fields of study, from enrollment to graduation.***

### **Objective 1**

To restructure CU-Boulder's retention efforts by establishing linkages between all academic departments to obtain "real time" information related to the academic well-being of African American students who are enrolled in the various academic departments.

### **Objective 2**

To create a support network that features interdisciplinary resources to ensure student success (staff and peer counseling, student access to every University offering, with dedicated staff in each department).

### **Objective 3**

To actively promote recognition of African American cultural events (university-wide, community-wide, state-wide, nationwide, and worldwide) in the forms of general assemblies, music festivals, food and vendor displays, movies, public service presentations, and publications related to academic and student life of African American students.

## A Plan of Action

***Goal C: To create and maintain places, both inside and outside of academic and non-academic buildings, where the history and contributions of African Americans are publicly displayed.***

### **Objective 1**

To develop places in each academic department where the history of a significant number of African Americans' academic works relating to the mission of each academic discipline are displayed. This can be accomplished through linkages between academic departments such as CAAAS.

### **Objective 2**

To identify, frame, and prominently display, within each academic department, numerous images of African American men and women who have made notable contributions in their chosen academic fields.

### **Objective 3**

To develop and maintain in the greater library system dedicated academic sections for browsing and research purposes, related to the contributions of African Americans.

### **Objective 4**

To establish an archive in Norlin Library in which the original works of African Americans are contained, organized, and made available, either as hard copy, print, or electronically produced material; and to include a line item in the Norlin Library's budget which will be used to collect information related to African Americans.

### **Objective 5**

To hire dedicated staff to coordinate the archives, and to employ students as research assistants. This can be connected to students' fields of interest as part of their academic pursuits.

## A Plan of Action

***Goal D: Use creative funding as a recruitment tool to motivate the parents of African American student scholars to send their children to study at CU-Boulder.***

### **Objective 1**

To increase financial support for African American students each year. This requires a dedicated commitment of state funds, as well as partnerships with philanthropic organizations that are currently committed to diversity and inclusion work.

### **Objective 2**

To designate and dedicate a portion of the available funds in the University Foundation to support scholarships for African American student scholars.

### **Objective 3**

To designate and dedicate a portion of the available funds in the University Athletic Department to support scholarships for African American student scholars.

### **Objective 4**

To identify scholarships and solicit grants available to African American students based on need and accomplishment.

### **Objective 5**

Create an endowment fund to ensure longevity and future success for the students and for the community.

## A Plan of Action

***Goal E: Build relationships with corporations and businesses to prepare students to pursue professional careers.***

### **Objective 1**

To foster educational, corporate, and business collaborations that identify and support programs, internships, mentorships, fellowships, and endowments.

### **Objective 2**

To raise awareness of the value added in supplying the professional pipeline for the business community, the University, the African American students, and society.

## Summary/Conclusion

We are now two decades into the new millennium, and CU-Boulder looks much like it did in the 1950s.

That was not acceptable then. It is not acceptable today.

Author Mary Kenyatta, critiquing a study on education and poverty in 1997 in the *Harvard Educational Review*, rejected traditional thinking that “ignores racial and class stratification.” She said such a mindset “is not designed to expand democratic participation of all US citizens. Rather, it will continue to reproduce the race and class hierarchy that so many of us in education prefer to ignore.”

“For me,” she concluded, “that is not acceptable national policy. It is, rather, a recipe for disaster for the future of the United States and its citizens.”

In his book, *Inequality in the Promised Land: Race, Resources, and Suburban Schooling*, R. L’Heureux Lewis-McCoy, Ph.D., wrote that even in racially and economically diverse schools, there is unequal access to resources that create a more subtle opportunity gap which in turn creates barriers for low-income, non-White students.

There are many more low-income students of high academic talent than are being acknowledged, argued Stanford University economics professor Caroline M. Hoxby, Ph.D., and Harvard University public policy professor Christopher Avery, Ph.D. They contend that colleges today appear to be “searching under the lamp post” for the small number of students that are visible, rather than searching “where the students are.”

The University of Colorado-Boulder is fully capable of looking beyond the lamp post.

The success of any project, no matter how well intended, and no matter how many glowing words are used to describe it, is directly dependent on having the will to commit to its stated goals.

Adequate, on-going, and dedicated financial support is crucial to the execution. CU-Boulder can set a precedent by reallocating revenues to financially support actual diversification, inclusion, and equity.

Further, the University of Colorado-Boulder can send a message that it values African American scholarship as much as it values African American athleticism, and it can serve as a model for other institutions to emulate. The goals and objectives listed in this document build upon decades of studies, surveys, reports, projects, programs, and good intentions.

It is critically important that real inclusion be central to any university community that seeks to play an important role in the growth and development of a changing society. CU-Boulder must not only look like America, it must also represent America.

The University has an opportunity to be a national flagship institution, one that sets a new tone and enhances its academic reputation by breaking out of the box of indifference and neglect toward the education of African American citizens.

In 2014, then CU-Boulder Chancellor Philip P. DiStefano, Ph.D., challenged the administration to make the campus more reflective of Colorado's population by 2020. In 2024, that has not yet happened.

The University aspires to be recognized as a national and international leader in higher education. To achieve this distinction, the University needs look no further than its "CU Vision Statement."

"The University of Colorado will be a premier, accessible, and transformative public university that provides a quality and affordable education with outstanding teaching, learning, research, service, and health care. Through collaboration, innovation, technology and entrepreneurship, CU will expand student success, diversity, and the economic foundation of the State of Colorado."

But, beyond that, the visionary institutional consciousness of any quality university requires that it make continued forays into "uncharted territory" in order to uphold its stated creed, as well as the values demonstrated through application of strategic imperatives of inclusion and academic excellence.

Imagine the CU-Boulder campus as a place where being an African American is no longer an oddity. This is a critical vision that recognizes that the more social interaction there is among the people who perceive “differences,” the more able they are to find solutions to problems that impact everyone in Colorado, the United States of America, and the world.

Former President George Norlin, Ph.D., once challenged the University to seek out the talented regardless of where they came from, who their parents were, or how much they could spend. He rejected those who urged discrimination, putting the University of Colorado's very existence on the line.

That is the kind of moral courage that is needed today.

Current CU President Todd Saliman echoed Norlin’s sentiments. Speaking at a gathering honoring retired Professor William King, CU-Boulder’s longest-serving African American professor, President Saliman spoke to the need for real action on equity.

“We need to get to a place where the University of Colorado reflects Colorado and the country because it doesn’t today,” he said. “There is a lot of work to be done, and we have a lot of opportunities out there. And it is not just about talking. We actually have to do the work. We have to put money on the table.”

What remains is for the University of Colorado to simply do what it says.

## Resources for Further Study

**Arnold, Lauren Jade.** 2019. "Black students have suffered racism at CU Boulder for decades. Do you believe us now?" *The Denver Post*. October 21. <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/10/21/guest-commentary-black-students-have-suffered-racism-at-cu-boulder-for-decades-do-you-believe-us-now/>

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