

2024-
2025

July 1, 2024 -
June, 30 2025



IMPACT REPORT



Center for Community Engagement
to advance Scholarship & Learning
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

ABOUT US

The [Center for Community Engagement](#) (CCESL) connects students, faculty, staff, and community partners through programming to promote far-reaching and sustainable outcomes for the public good. CCESL is part of the [Office for Public Good Strategy and Research](#) in Academic Affairs.



WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION

1

Everyone experiences liberation and flourishing through their community-university collaborations.

OUR MISSION

2

To foster collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and community partners to advance knowledge and social change for the public good.

OUR VALUES

3

Mutual Benefit and Reciprocity, Anti-Oppression, Intellectual Rigor

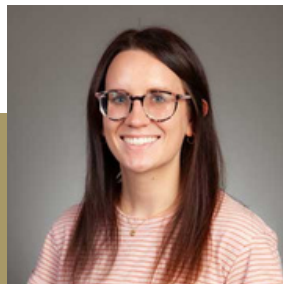
MEET THE CCESL TEAM



Cara DiEnno
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



John Macikas
ASSOCIATE
DIRECTOR*



Maddie Duven
BUSINESS
PROGRAM
MANAGER*



Angelica Ortiz
OUTREACH &
COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATOR

In addition to staff, student employees help advance CCESL's work serving as Community-Engaged Fellows, CCESL Student Scholars, or Graduate Leads.

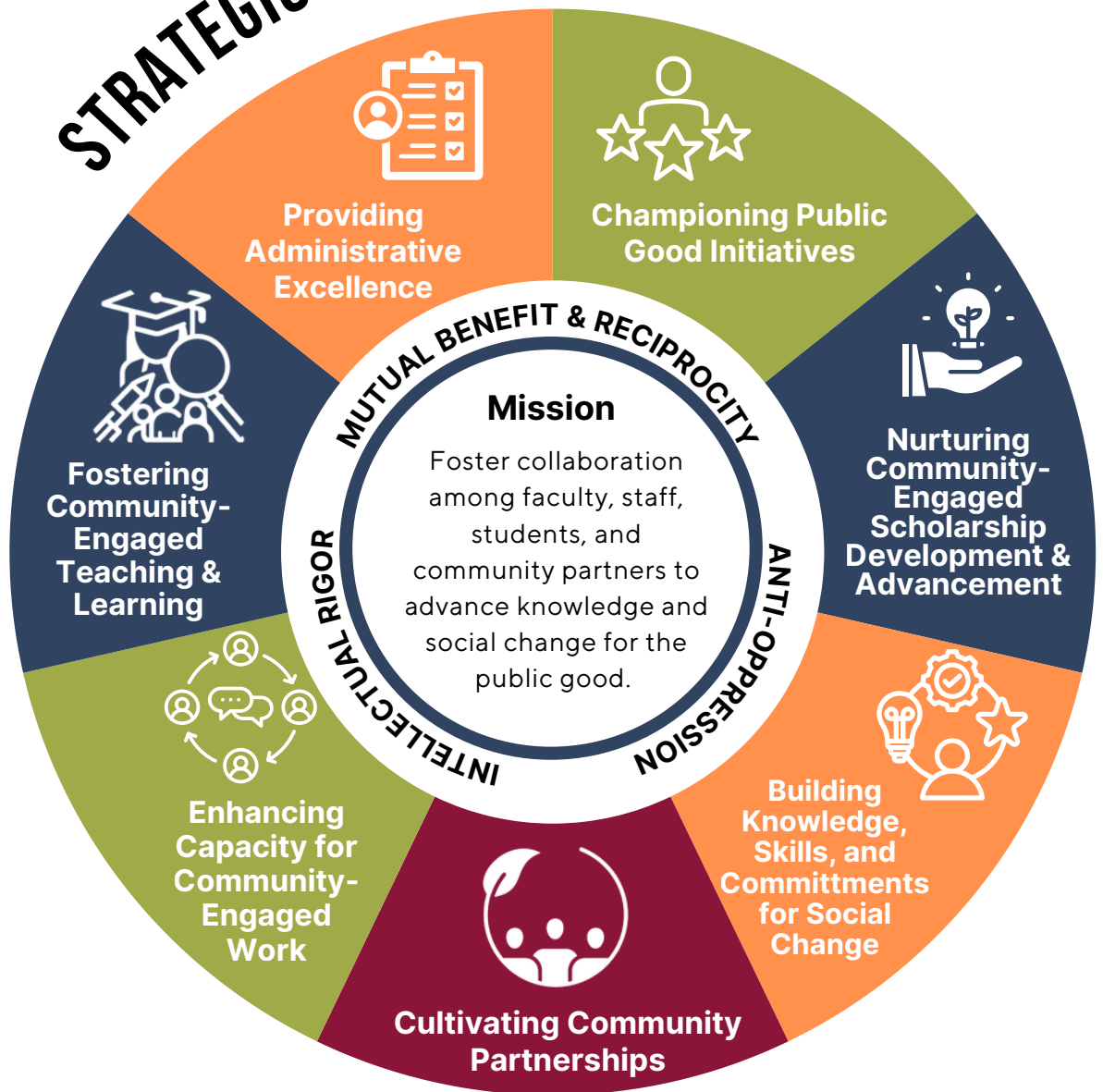
**John transitioned from Student Programs Manager into Associate Director in December 2024*

***Maddie served as the Business Program Manager until May 2025*

OUR APPROACH

We pull on diverse traditions and fields to create a distinctively DU approach to university-community collaboration that bridges community organizing, collective impact, community-engaged scholarship, and anchor institution work. This broad approach puts students, staff, faculty, and community members in dialogue and relationship leading to collaborative strength.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



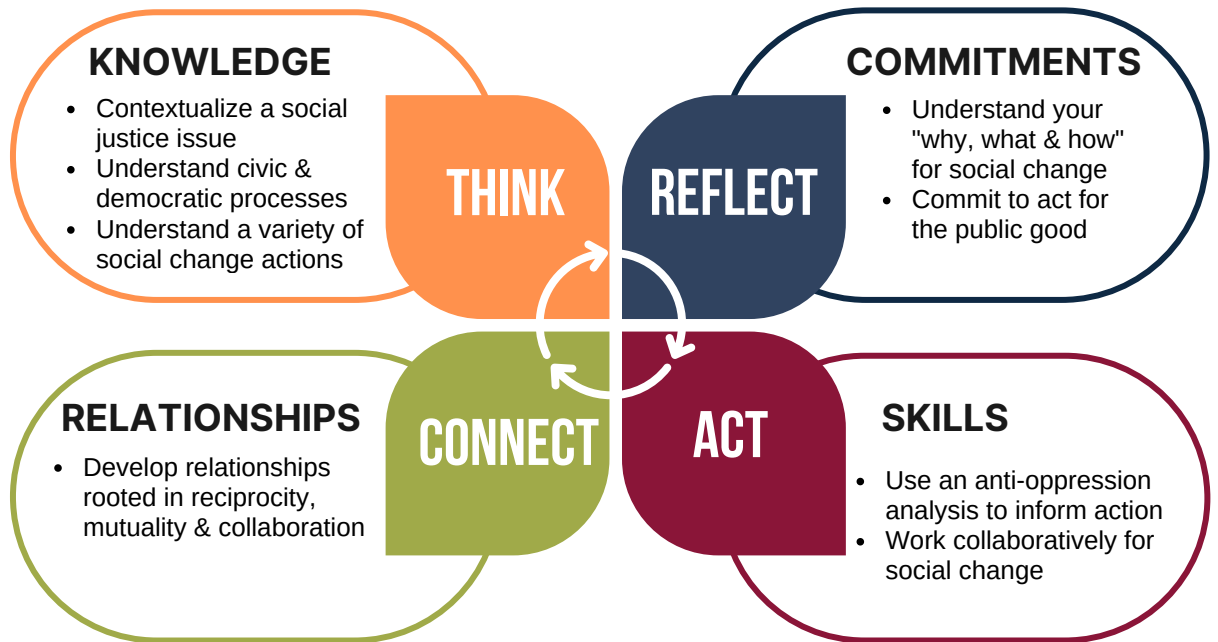
CCESL has identified seven strategic priorities to operationalize the Center's mission, vision, and values. We recognize that these strategic priorities are not mutually exclusive but, taken together, provide the foundation for our work.

STUDENT PROGRAMS APPROACH

We apply the philosophy and skills of the community organizing model, such as identifying self-interest, building relationships, understanding root causes, restructuring power, and centering the experience of the communities most impacted by injustice and systemic oppression, to inform how we build partnerships for community engagement.

We employ a set of knowledge, skills, and commitments through our student programs that are aligned with this approach. We believe that students' capacity to do authentic, ethical community-engaged work is enhanced when they **Think, Connect, Act, Reflect**.

STUDENT FRAMEWORK



I created zines, artwork and fliers to share the reality of climate change and how the eco-park could place power in Valverde's hands. I learned that creating beautiful, high quality artwork that boils down climate change into its most basic components opened the door to sharing my project with the Valverde community, and forming meaningful partnerships.

- CCESL Student



I appreciate how in-depth this course goes in order to first understand the disparities in food accessibility (specifically healthy foods) and the communities primarily affected, before working with our community partner...By learning about this in school, we are not just volunteering for short-term moral reward but using our education and privilege to design and spread volunteer recruitment messages for Metro Caring to hopefully amplify and aid food insecurity in the Denver metro area

- CCESL Student





STUDENT PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

CCESL offers [opportunities for students](#) in the form of classes, internships, mentored co-curricular programs, grants and scholarships where they can apply their academic interests to problem-solving with community partners through mentored research, scholarly, and creative work – called [signature work](#). Students engage in meaningful collaborations with communities, fostering the development of knowledge, skills, and civic identity. Our student programs are designed to cultivate the knowledge, skills, and commitments student need to carry out signature work, become tomorrow’s civic leaders, and prepare them to address [grand challenges](#).



98%

expressed confidence in their ability to make a meaningful impact within their communities



96%

of students learned how they can contribute to work with communities utilizing newly acquired skills



97%

of undergraduates in CCESL programs persisted toward graduation or continued enrollment

PROGRAM IMPACT

AT A GLANCE

186 STUDENTS INVOLVED IN CCESL OPPORTUNITIES

81K AWARDED IN STUDENT GRANTS

34 NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS STUDENTS REPRESENTED

1372 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN COMMUNITY-ENGAGED COURSES

FEATURED STUDENT WORK

EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF AN AQUAPONIC INTEGRATED ECO-PARK



A CCESL student collaborated with the Valverde Neighborhood community to explore the environmental, social, and policy feasibility of creating a park of floating platforms that grow food crop and native plants on the South Platte River in Valverde.

INTEGRATIVE HEALTH CARE IN ETHIOPIA



CCESL students collaborated with an interdisciplinary team to identify the mental health challenges faced by displaced and vulnerable groups in Tigray and develop strategies that could inform more inclusive frameworks for disaster preparedness and response.

FACULTY & STAFF PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

CCESL provides workshops, grants, events, consultation and other [faculty and staff opportunities](#) to support community-engaged methods in their research, teaching, and professional practice, strengthening both student experiences and public impact.

AT A GLANCE

164 PARTICIPATED IN CCESL OPPORTUNITIES

20 MEMBERS MENTORED CCESL STUDENTS

57 MEMBERS TEACH COMMUNITY-ENGAGED COURSES

15 RECEIVED CCESL GRANT FUNDING

23K IN STIPENDS FOR MENTORING STUDENT SIGNATURE WORK

162K AWARDED IN TEACHING & RESEARCH GRANTS



Though preparation-intensive, this kind of community-engaged course offers powerful opportunities to support student growth, community problem-solving, and relationship-building between DU and local organizations.

- Grant Recipient



The Public Good project has already led to opportunities for our team to present at academic conferences, and academic manuscripts are in process...and has expanded the work of Dr. Chess's team surrounding financial wellbeing of older adults.

- Grant Recipient

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN DENVER



With support from the Public Good Fund, Dr. Eric Chess with the Knoebel Institute for Healthy Aging, and community partner Elevated Denver used their findings to identify resources to advocate for services that support older unhoused individuals.

GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS PROJECT



Through CCESL funding, Dr. Jing Li partnered with the Metropolitan Denver Nature Alliance (Metro DNA) to have her Geography students combine, expand, and explore Metro DNA's GIS assets to help inform their strategic planning process for developing a regional vision for people and nature.

COMMUNITY & CAMPUS IMPACT

We serve as connectors and facilitators because we believe in the power of partnerships. We support relationships between the campus and community (local, regional/state, national, global) that are forged from trust and emphasize "the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching).

COMMUNITY IMPACT AT A GLANCE

92 COMMUNITY PARTNERS SUPPORTED THROUGH CCESL AFFILIATED PROJECTS

78 STUDENTS INVOLVED WITH CCESL AFFILIATED COMMUNITY PARTNERS

20 CONNECTIONS MADE THROUGH SCHOLAR SHOP

FEATURED PARTNERSHIP: VALVERDE MOVEMENT PROJECT

This project taught me the power of listening. Hearing stories of resilience from residents who had endured generations of systemic neglect was deeply humbling. It reminded me that true engagement is relational, that justice and healing are intertwined, and that the people closest to the problems must be central to the solutions.

[CCESL's Scholar Shop](#) resource connects DU faculty, staff, and students with community partners to develop collaborative projects that meet community-identified needs.

CO-HOSTED EVENTS & INITIATIVES

CCESL was responsive to ongoing requests for consultation on a range of topics, from community-engaged learning implementation and community-engaged research to community partnership building and new campus initiatives.

- Collaborated with Marrissa Ronquillo (Career and Professional Development Assistant Director of Professional Mentoring) to pilot a CCESL Student Alumni Crimson Constellation group.
- Collaborated with Denver Public Libraries on the Feed Your Mind series
- Co-organized and co-executed the Public Good Celebration, including the Student Signature Work Showcase (renamed from Undergraduate Research and Scholarship Showcase)
- Contributed to multiple 4D sponsored events, including the 4D Experiential Learning Fair, 4D Fall Kickoff, and 4D Symposium.



ANCHOR STRATEGIES

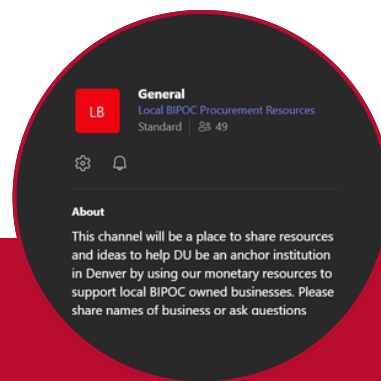
CCESL SPENDING: LOCAL SPEND ANALYSIS

23

LOCAL VENDORS WERE SUPPORTED THROUGH FOOD/CATERING PURCHASES

Anchor institutions are large organizations that are necessarily tied (anchored) to their locations, such as universities or hospitals. Because these institutions can't move to another city the way most private businesses can, anchor institutions intentionally apply place-based economic power and human capital to build partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and community members that mutually benefit the long-term well-being of both the University and the broader community.

As a private university working for the public good, the University of Denver is able to use its own purchasing power to support and empower local companies, and to help traditionally marginalized populations in our city thrive.



In the fall of 2024, CCESL started conducting annual local spend analyses. The Center was able to increase the percentage of our spending that used local vendors from 61% in 23-24 to 69% in 24-25. CCESL encourages grant recipients to utilize our curated “Buy Local” database as well.

CCESL staff activated the “Local Procurement” Teams group through posts soliciting ideas from members, helping staff find local vendors for a variety of goods, and a space to share favorite local caterers. Additional resources were posted to support DU’s continued work as an anchor institution.

CCESL’s Executive Director and Business Manager participated in the “Cultivating Community Voices” Sustained Conversation group through TRUCEN (The Research University’s Civic Engagement Network). Conversations with colleagues across the country focused on how to equitably recognize the contributions of community partners in community-engaged work.



RECOGNIZING CHANGEMAKERS

Part of institutionalizing community-engaged work involves recognizing campus leaders. CCESL honors outstanding students, faculty, and staff through awards and recognition.

13

NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

22

NUMBER OF FACULTY & STAFF RECOGNIZED

300+

PUBLIC GOOD CELEBRATION ATTENDEES



CRIMSON & GOLD AWARDS

CCESL honors outstanding students through the [Crimson & Gold awards](#) by nominating an undergraduate and graduate student in the following categories annually:

PUBLIC GOOD STUDENT OF THE YEAR

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER OF THE YEAR

SERVICE STUDENT OF THE YEAR

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PHOTO SHOWCASE

The [Community Engagement Photo Showcase](#) highlights student and faculty photos and stories that illustrate the impact of their community-engaged work on their experience at DU. Prizes are awarded for submissions that embody the spirit of CCESL's pathways to the public good, [Think. Connect. Act. Reflect.](#)

KIMMY FOUNDATION COMMUNITY SERVICE PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Annually, the [Kimmy Foundation Community Service Professional Award](#) recipients are chosen from seniors graduating in the spring from DU's traditional undergraduate program based on past contributions to community service as a DU student and future contributions to society via community service or engagement following graduation.

PUBLIC GOOD CELEBRATION

CCESL, in partnership, with the [Office for Public Good Strategy and Research](#), helped host the third annual [Public Good Celebration](#) – expanded into a series of four events to highlight and strengthen University and community collaborations:

- Community Engagement Photo Showcase
- Student Signature Work Showcase (formerly held separately as the Undergraduate Research Showcase)
- Growing Your Work & Impact Resource Fair
- Faculty and Community Mentor Reception



SCHOLARSHIP & LEADERSHIP

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the scholarly products developed by CCESL-connected faculty and students, CCESL staff members are committed to disseminating knowledge and experience in the field of community-engaged learning and community engagement through scholarship. Below are a few examples.

Macikas, J. (2025, April 27). *Faith-based critical service-learning, whiteness, and spirituality: A narrative inquiry of white alumni* [Research-in-Progress Roundtable Session]. 2025 AERA Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, United States.

DiEnno, C.M. & Romero, T. (2024) *Dreaming and scheming together: Uniting community engagement and diversity leaders*. Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities Annual Conference. Minneapolis, MN.

DiEnno, C.M., Atzl, V., Antoniou, A. & DePrince, A. (2024). Collective impact as a novel approach to seeding collaboration for boundary spanning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 28(3), 43-58.

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY SERVICE

CCESL staff shared their knowledge and expertise on community-engaged perspectives in a range of campus and community service activities including participating in:

- The DU Women's Leadership Council
- The Denver Anchor Network
- The Research University Civic Engagement Network (TRUCEN)
- Various Interdisciplinary class presentations



**Center for Community Engagement
to advance Scholarship & Learning**
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

2024 - 2025 IMPACT REPORT

CONNECT WITH US



ccesl@du.edu



du.edu/ccesl/



Sign up for our e-newsletter:
ccesl.info/newsletter