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SERVING

Community College of Denver  
Metropolitan State University of Denver  
University of Colorado Denver



Auraria  
Campus

*Auraria Higher Education Center*

**STRATEGIC  
PLAN**

denver, Co





Auraria  
Campus  
denver, CO

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# A Message from the CEO

The Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) opened its doors in 1976. The promise of a singular college campus as the home to three public higher education institutions was powerfully innovative and the greater Denver community immediately embraced this unique model. The Auraria Campus represents the American Dream – no matter where you start or how far you want to go in pursuit of higher education, the options are seemingly endless. To meet the needs of a complex and ever-changing urban campus, AHEC embarked this past year on a strategic planning process, the first in its history. We can think of no better time to define a strategic path forward towards future success and growth that will serve our community for years to come.



The Auraria Board of Directors approved AHEC's strategic plan in October 2021. The strategic planning process was highly collaborative and reflected many months of brainstorming, information gathering, analysis, distillation, and socialization with community members across all four institutions on the Auraria Campus. Their thoughtful comments and feedback helped make the strategic plan what it is today, and we sincerely appreciate their time, commitment, and service to this vital undertaking.

The strategic plan highlights three key themes, Experience Auraria, Elevate Service and Expand Impact, that we want to embody for those who study, work, live, and play on the Auraria Campus. These three themes will live at the heart of our work as our staff focuses on meeting the needs of our campus community in new, innovative ways.

Drilling down further, the strategic plan focuses on four specific goals: exemplary service, activated partnerships, vibrant environments, and sustainable funding to move the Auraria Higher Education Center confidently into the future. Operationalizing the strategic plan is the next step through the careful prioritization of initiatives developed for each goal with clear milestones and corresponding outputs or outcomes. For example, with the goal of

creating a vibrant environment on campus, a primary initiative centers on reimagining the Auraria Higher Education Center and redefining the boundaries of the “campus” and the “city.” We want to blur the lines between the campus and downtown Denver, enhancing Auraria as a campus, neighborhood, and destination.

In conclusion, this strategic plan will help AHEC focus its energy and resources, strengthening partnerships and operations to ensure that employees and stakeholders work toward common goals. In collaboration with the Auraria Board of Directors, AHEC will establish intended outcomes and results, assessing and adjusting our organization's direction in response to a changing environment focusing on the future.

Thank you for joining us on this journey,

**Colleen Walker, CEO**  
Auraria Higher Education Center



Auraria Campus, 10th Street Plaza between  
West Classroom and Central Classroom



# 04 Auraria Higher Education Center

The Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) was built to house and serve 15,000 students, a number that was exceeded when we opened our doors in 1976. AHEC has continued to adapt and grow to become a modern campus bustling with activity in the heart of downtown Denver. Today, the Auraria Campus is the largest collective college campus in Colorado, serving over 43,000 students, faculty, and staff. AHEC proudly operates the Auraria Campus on an efficient shared services model to support three of Colorado's finest higher educational institutions: Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), and University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver).

As a separate state entity, AHEC's role is to provide and manage shared services, facilities, and property to support these prominent institutions in achieving their goals.

*serving over*

**43,000**

*students,*

*faculty, and staff*





Auraria Campus, corner of 12th Street and Larimer Street

# Crafting Our Strategic Plan

In partnership with Credo, a comprehensive higher education consulting firm, AHEC embarked upon the strategic planning process and began to take steps toward developing a future vision to advance the collective mission of the campus in late 2020.

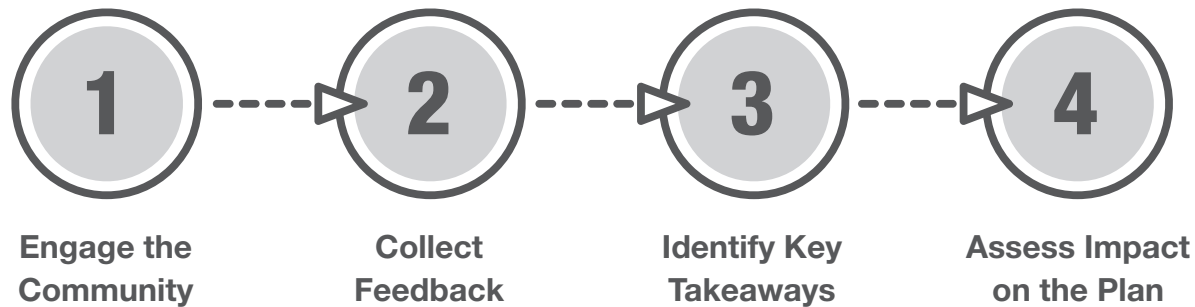
After bringing the idea of a new strategic plan before the Auraria Executives Council and the Auraria Board of Directors in December 2020, AHEC's senior leadership team created a strategic plan with help and input from our stakeholders. This included broad community engagement days with students, faculty, and administrators from Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Colorado Denver, AHEC staff, and the Auraria Board of Directors throughout Spring 2021.

In June 2021, a draft of the strategic plan was presented to the Auraria Executives Council and the Auraria Board of Directors. The Board accepted the draft plan, and AHEC moved toward the next step – the socialization process.

# 08 Socialization Process

Over the course of several months, AHEC socialized the draft strategic plan with our campus community to ensure it adequately reflected what was most important, strategic, and impactful. In short, did the proposed themes, goals, and initiatives resonate and represent what our campus community wanted from AHEC and what they wanted for the Auraria Campus? Over 40 socialization sessions took place with several groups and organizations from CCD, MSU Denver, and CU Denver including student groups, faculty senates and councils, and townhalls. We also heard from our employees and held several listening sessions within AHEC. We analyzed all community feedback and identified the key takeaways, incorporating the expanded voice of our community.

## PROCESS

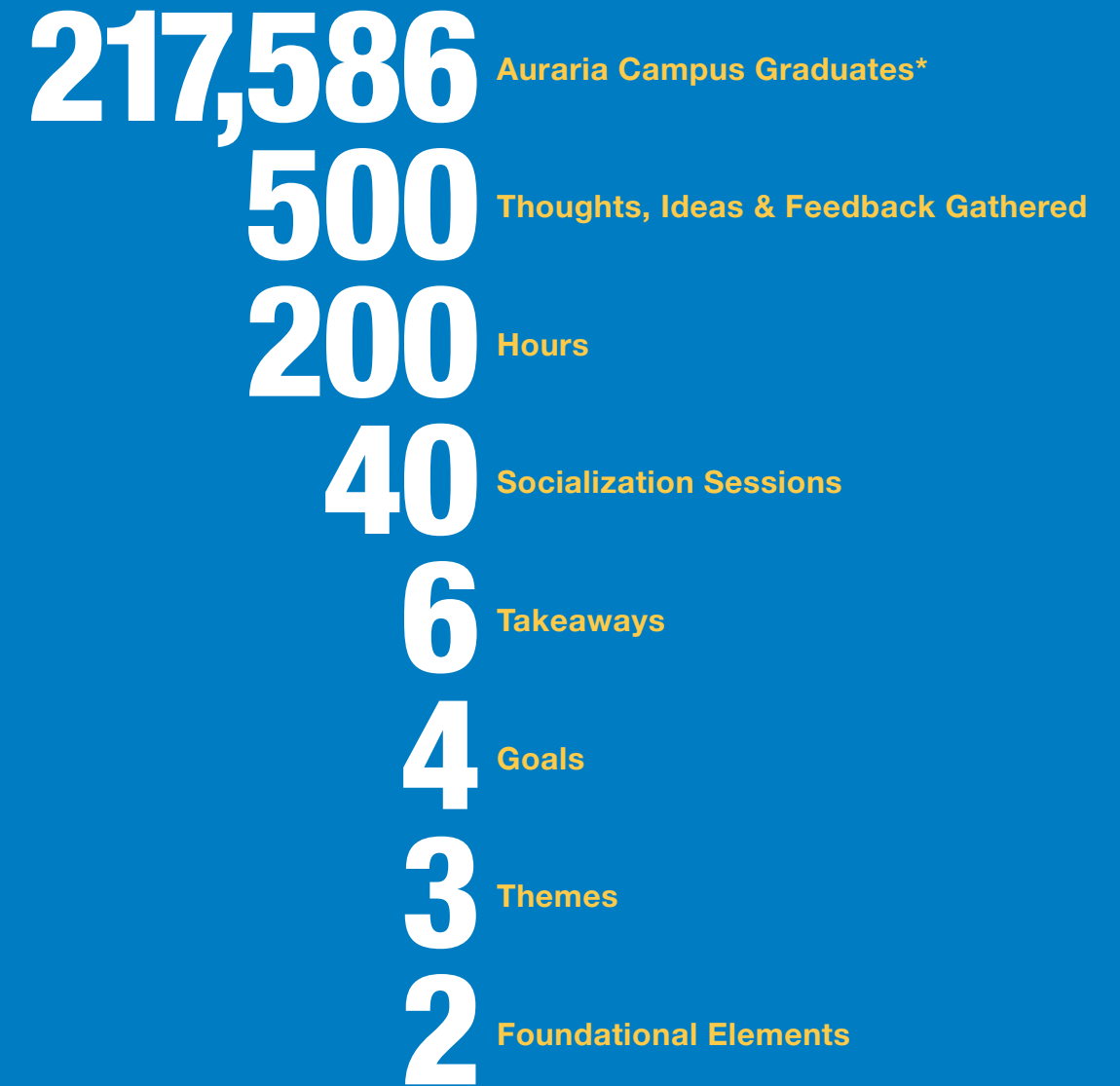


## TAKEAWAYS

After the socialization process was completed, feedback was categorized and grouped. From there, six key takeaways were incorporated into the revised strategic plan. These six takeaways helped guide us as we streamlined our strategic plan to better fit our campus community's needs.

- Respond to the Now
- Continuous Engagement
- Foster a Sense of Belonging
- One Auraria
- Bridging Connections
- Embrace our Diverse Community

# BY THE NUMBERS

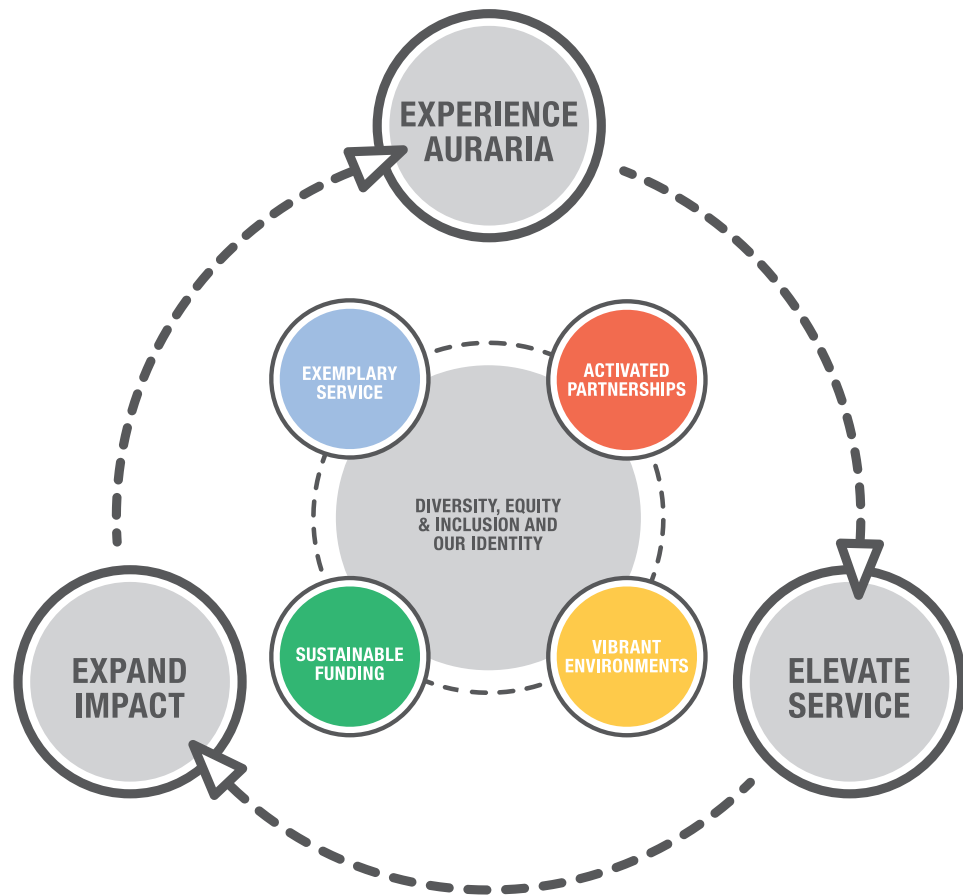


\*This number does not include CCD graduates prior to 2016.



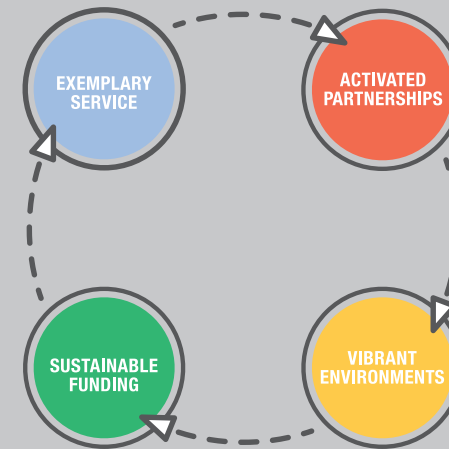
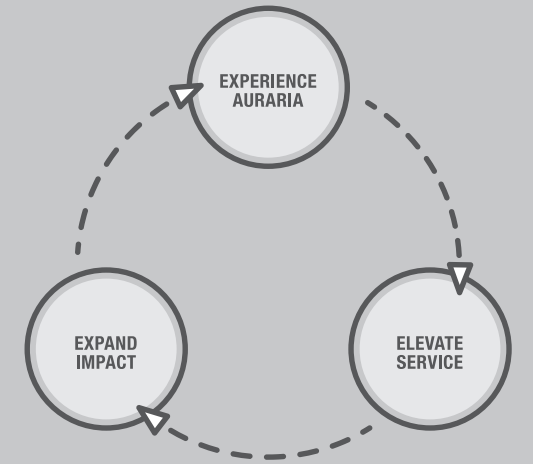
# The Auraria Ecosystem

Each part of the Auraria Ecosystem reinforces the other. The four goals establish the foundation of the ecosystem. Diversity, equity, and inclusion, and our identity serve as the connective tissue. Successfully executing the strategic plan will ultimately create an Auraria Campus that is part of the fabric of downtown Denver and is a welcome oasis for students seeking public higher education and community members looking for a diverse neighborhood to live, work, play, and learn.



## THEMES

The strategic plan highlights three key themes that we want to embody for those who study, work, live, and play on the Auraria Campus. These three themes will live at the heart of our work as our staff focuses on meeting the needs of our campus community in new and innovative ways.



## GOALS

The strategic plan focuses on four specific goals: exemplary service, activated partnerships, vibrant environments, and sustainable funding. The next step is to operationalize the strategic plan through the careful prioritization of initiatives for each goal with clear milestones and corresponding outputs or outcomes.

## FOUNDATION

### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

AHEC is committed to ensuring our campus is a place where differences are welcomed, and every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion. As we implement our strategic plan, diversity, equity, and inclusion will be integral to the process as we celebrate our diversity to advance our collective capabilities.

### Identity

Our identity will be woven into all facets of our plan as we work to live out our strategic vision for the future success of the Auraria Campus.





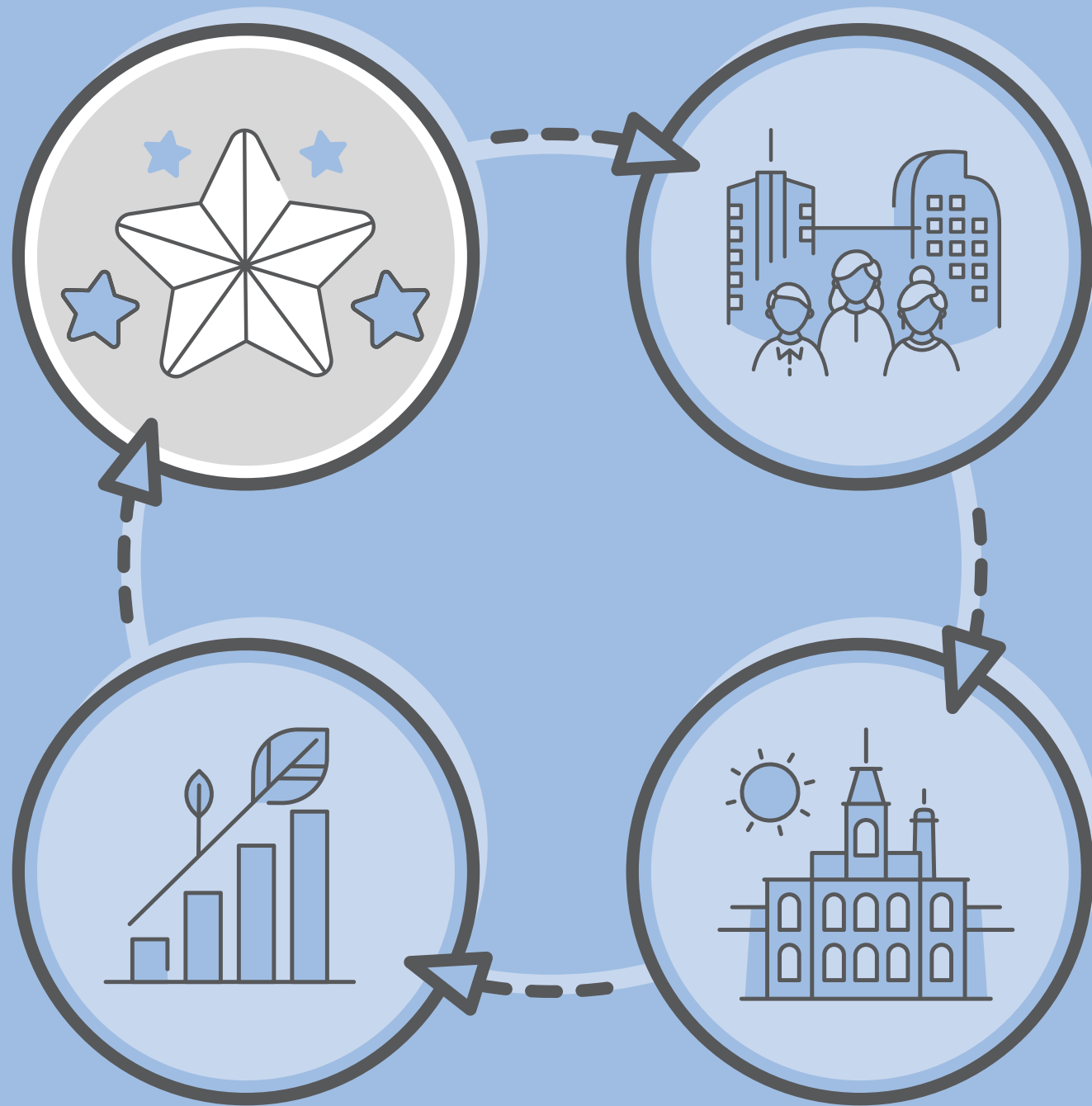
“

*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

*— Maya Angelou*

goal one

EXEMPLARY  
SERVICE



# Exemplary Service

As the stewards of the Auraria Campus, it will always be our top priority as AHEC to provide excellent customer service to the students, faculty, and staff on this campus. Through this goal, we want to improve our campus by accomplishing these initiatives.

## INITIATIVES

### Reclaim our Identity

- Define our mission
- Develop our brand
- Embrace who and what we are

### Structure for Success

- Modernize our workforce, staffing and salaries to increase retention and recruitment
- Emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion
- Facilitate professional development
- Examine organization structure, processes and governing bodies

### Improvement with Purpose

- Capitalize on efficiencies
- Leverage staff talents
- Quantify customer service
- Sustainably allocate resources



*...provide a system for facilitating cooperation among the constituent institutions, their governing boards and the governing board created by this statute (AHEC).*

*— Colorado Revised Statutes*

Legislative Declaration 23-70-101 (1)(e), 2008

goal two

# ACTIVATED PARTNERSHIPS



# Activated Partnerships

A founding tenant of AHEC was to facilitate cooperation among our partners. The commitment to return to the spirit of a shared campus that benefits a greater proportion of campus community members, strengthens, and increases communication between the partner institutions, and ensures we preserve and honor our campus's rich history. This is a collective goal all partners will participate in.

## INITIATIVES

### Sustain the Voice & Legacy of Auraria

- Honor, celebrate and seek reconciliation with historical campus communities
- Create a land acknowledgment
- Cultivate a sense of community belonging
- Promote status as Hispanic Serving Institutions

### Return to the Spirit of a Shared Campus

- Enhance stewardship
- Shared commitment to maintenance and modernization
- Increase collaboration
- Promote the use of the unified Auraria Campus name

### Outreach & Communication

- Increase communication to and between institutions
- Standardize collection of feedback
- Collaborate with off-campus organizations
- Build connections with surrounding neighborhoods



*This center recognizes and preserves a portion of Colorado history through the continuation of the name of this area's first city, Auraria, and through the preserving of landmarks and important structures.*

— *Richard D. Lamm*

Former Governor of Colorado, Proclamation dedicating the Auraria Higher Education Center, January 21, 1976

goal three

*Vibrant*  
**VIBRANT ENVIRONMENTS**  
*environments*



# Vibrant Environments

The Auraria Campus should be a place where students, faculty, staff, and downtown Denver community members come to gather, cultivate relationships, and be inspired. It will be AHEC's responsibility to create that environment. By modernizing our academic facilities, establishing connections to downtown to activate the campus, and enhancing the vibrancy of our common areas, we hope to achieve an environment that draws our community in.

## INITIATIVES

### Modernize Academic Facilities

- Ensure classrooms and labs facilitate modern learning
- Eliminate the digital divide via equitable access to technology

### Enhance Common Spaces Indoors & Outdoors

- Re-imagine the Tivoli Student Union
- Improve lounges, corridors, restrooms, etc.
- Elevate the experience of campus grounds
- Clarify wayfinding to and across campus

### Activate the Campus

- Establish Auraria as a destination
- Strengthen connections to Downtown and transit
- Add amenities and services with 24/7 opportunities





*Facilitate, in conjunction with the private sector, the development of facilities at and within the center for the purposes of providing moneys to the center, providing occupational and educational opportunities consistent with the mission of the constituent institutions, and integrating the center with the adjacent Denver area.*

*— Colorado Revised Statutes*

Legislative Declaration 23-70-101 (1)(e), 2008

goal four

# SUSTAINABLE FUNDING



# Sustainable Funding

Creating a sustainable funding model for AHEC is a must so the other strategic goals can be accomplished. AHEC will explore alternative funding strategies, focus on economic development, and maximize existing assets.

## INITIATIVES

### Leverage Existing Assets

- Maximize State funding and investment
- Optimize space utilization

### Drive Auxiliary Revenues

- Add revenue generating amenities
- Increase event use on campus
- Capitalize on parking infrastructure

### Identify Alternative Funding Strategies

- Social impact bonds
- Public-private partnerships
- Mixed-use development
- Housing

### Focus on Economic Development

- Craft a business development plan
- Reestablish the Auraria Foundation
- Secure grant and philanthropic funding



““

***Internationalism does not mean the end of individual nations. Orchestras don't mean the end of violins.***””

— Golda Meir

Fourth Prime Minister of Israel