



# University of Colorado

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**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Deborah Méndez-Wilson

University Relations

1800 Grant Street, Suite 800

Denver, CO 80203

Phone: 303-860-5627 Cell: 303-968-9392 Fax: 303-860-5610

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## **CU President Honors Three Programs for Academic Leadership**

*Boulder's Physics, Aerospace Engineering and UCCS Chemistry Lead on Student Success*

DENVER—University of Colorado President Bruce D. Benson today honored three CU academic programs whose high-performing students excelled while in college and went on to post-graduate success in higher education, the business world and other professional realms.

At a special reception, Benson recognized the University of Colorado at Boulder aerospace engineering and physics departments and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs chemistry department with his first annual President's Award for Academic Leadership. All three programs received a plaque and a cash award for efforts that resulted in higher student achievement before and after graduation.

CU-Boulder's aerospace engineering program garnered a first-place \$15,000 award for undergraduate student achievement, as well as a second-place \$5,000 award for graduate student achievement. The CU-Boulder physics department earned a \$15,000 award for first place in graduate student achievement, and the UCCS chemistry department received \$5,000 for second place in undergraduate student achievement. A plaque with each year's winners will be on permanent display in the Office of the President.

Established this year, the President's Award for Academic Leadership recognizes undergraduate academic programs whose students demonstrate consistent, extraordinary achievement at the national or international level. The annual award symbolizes the premium CU places on the teaching, research, creative work and service that foster quality undergraduate education.

A committee representing the offices of President Benson and the chancellors of all three CU campuses selected the winners.

"It is important to reward academic departments that continually push students toward extraordinary achievements," said CU President Bruce D. Benson. "These achievements will not only benefit the students in their careers, but also highlight the exceptional caliber of the university."

CU-Boulder's aerospace engineering program submitted a detailed report highlighting numerous awards won over the past 15 years by the department, individual faculty and staff and students. Among other achievements, students received scholarships, prestigious internships and graduation honors, and performed community service and collaborated with faculty on more than \$1 million in research.

The aerospace engineering program plans to use the \$15,000 award to support undergraduate students and fully fund student teams that go to national competitions with senior projects. Additionally, the program will use the award money to sponsor a dinner at the home of Professor Penny Axelrad to foster unofficial mentoring of female students who are pursuing aerospace engineering careers. The dinner will include the

participation of officers from the Women in Engineering Program, female aerospace alumni, staff, professors and students.

“The success of these programs, measured not only in Colorado but throughout the world, highlights the outstanding work that our academic departments do in helping students realize their fullest potential,” said Vice President of Academic Affairs and Research Michael Poliakoff. “These programs are committed to measuring their effectiveness and to the ongoing pursuit of academic excellence. We are exceedingly proud of the achievements of the programs being honored by the president.”

Boulder’s physics department boasts three Nobel laureates, two MacArthur Fellows and seven members of the National Academy of Sciences. The department’s graduate program has grown significantly over the past decade and now competes with Harvard, Stanford, MIT and the University of California-Berkeley. Over the past three years, hundreds of articles written by students have been published and the program has grown to the fifth largest in the United States.

The UCCS chemistry department features recognized leaders who seek to give students the modern, comprehensive and rigorous education required to thrive in the age of global technological breakthroughs. Over the past several years, UCCS students improved benchmark scores on national exams such as the American Chemical Society Exams, the GRE and the MCAT. They also have won prestigious scholarships that honor academic and research achievement, including the Chevron-Phillips Scholarship.

The University of Colorado is a three-campus system with four locations: the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and the University of Colorado Denver’s downtown Denver campus and Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora. More than 55,000 undergraduate and graduate students are pursuing academic opportunities on CU campuses. CU is a premier teaching and research university, and is ranked sixth among public institutions in federal research expenditures by the National Science Foundation. Academic prestige is marked by the university’s four Nobel laureates, seven MacArthur “genius” Fellows, 18 alumni astronauts and 19 Rhodes Scholars. For more information about all of the CU campuses, go to [www.cu.edu](http://www.cu.edu).

**Media Contacts:** Deborah Méndez-Wilson, 303-860-5627  
Ashley Mohr, 303-860-5631

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