Institutional Description Template

***General Instructions (remove these instructions and any material you do not need)***

*When preparing an institutional description for your proposal, first look for requirements by the funding agency—what information they want; what format they want; etc. Include that information in the funding agency’s requested format or using a specific form identified in the program announcement or instructions for proposal development. For example, this type of information may be needed in the NSF Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources document; however, NSF requires you to only list project-specific resources that will be available for the proposed project.*

*The following general information was prepared by the Office of Research (OOR), the Offices of Sponsored Programs (OSP) and Research Integrity (ORI) and in collaboration with the units discussed here. This is general information and you may need to add additional information or modify it to meet the goals of your proposal. This information may be used without any additional approvals.*

*Highlighted material is information that needs to be changed yearly. Remove highlights prior to submission and ensure your data are accurate.*

*Information in italics within <> is information that you may want to consider adding. Please remove as needed. If you need additional support from units, contact those units to determine if they can provide the support you need.*

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## Institutional Description

Founded in 1965, the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (UCCS) is one of four campuses in the University of Colorado system. UCCS is designated as an eligible institution under Title III and Title V programs of the Higher Education Act and is an emerging Minority Serving Institution. UCCS is also situated among 3 Airforce and 1 Army military installations within the El Paso County region, employing nearly 30,000 military personnel. UCCS earned a gold rating amongst large public institutions designated as Military Friendly in 2022-2023. For 2023, UCCS earned Top Ten Gold Military Friendly ranking of Large Public Institutions and was designated Military Spouse Friendly for the second consecutive year by GI Jobs Victory Media

As a traditional teacher-scholar-centered university, UCCS added research and knowledge production to its central mission in 2011 and has grown its research agenda ever since. In 2019, UCCS was categorized for the first time as an R2 “high research activity” university. UCCS also offers a broad range of degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences and professional programs in business, engineering, nursing, education, and public affairs, and has earned a reputation as a leader in developing an educated workforce for a community specializing in high-tech industries. UCCS conferred 1,954 bachelor’s degrees, 559 master’s degrees, and 38 doctorate degrees during the 2022-2023 academic year. In addition, UCCS awarded nearly 205 licensures and certificates to students completing programs ranging from Cybersecurity to Education. Our success is the result of a number of strategic initiatives, including targeted recruitment and marketing highlighting competitive tuition rates, small class sizes, high levels of student interaction with faculty, and impressive facilities.

Our innovative approach to educating a diverse student body is embedded throughout the 56 baccalaureate, 23 master’s, and 8 doctoral degree programs across a broad range of disciplines. UCCS faculty composition includes 310 tenured or tenure-track faculty and 215 non-tenure track instructors, with an additional 27 research faculty, 34 clinical faculty, 489 lecturers, 85 adjunct or visiting faculty, and 27 adjoint faculty during the 2022-2023 academic year. In Fall 2023, UCCS welcomed 10,678 students on campus, which included 21% active-duty military personnel, veterans, and family members. Approximately 23% of currently enrolled students are first-generation college students, and 32.5% identify as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group.

In the last decade, 326 UCS graduates have gone on to pursue healthcare-related fields.

*<If you are writing an institutional grant, then the above may need additional information about students and offices to fit with your proposal goals. Consider what information helps reviewers know the institution to understand the context of your project>*

*<Add in specific departments involved in your project. Below are examples>*

Department of Biology**:** The Department of Biology faculty includes 8 tenure-track professors, whose research interests are broad, including molecular and cellular biology, neurobiology, plant molecular biology, ecology, evolutionary genetics, and epidemiology. Students in the Biology major are diverse, with nearly 37% belonging to ethnic minorities, and 23% (campus-wide) being first-generation college students. The department also has a growing master’s degree program, with approximately 10 students pursuing graduate studies each year. Importantly, the graduate degree program includes a research-based thesis that provides high-quality training in the scientific method and many advanced techniques. The campus has made an investment in the success of this graduate training program by offering 8 teaching assistantships for graduate students in Biology each year. Additionally, a significant number of undergraduate students conduct research with Biology tenure-track faculty, highlighting the importance and dedication of the Biology faculty to enhancing research experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Indeed, Biology faculty have an impressive record of publishing with both undergraduate and Master of Science graduate research students as co-authors in peer-reviewed journals such as *Developmental Biology, Developmental Dynamics, Molecular Ecology, RNA Biology, ~~and~~ Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and many others.*

Human Physiology and Nutrition Program: The Human Physiology and Nutrition Department represents the integration of degree programs in biomedical sciences, featuring a distinguished faculty comprising ten tenure-track members from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Research interests within the department span a diverse range, including physiological responses in extreme environmental conditions (e.g., high altitude, hot, cold), sex-specific differences in physiological regulation, metabolic adaptability across both healthy and diseased states, nutritional interventions to enhance quality of life and athletic performance, as well as biomechanical analysis of human movement in sports and occupational contexts.

With a burgeoning enrollment, the department now serves over 500 students across its applied physiology, biomedical science, exercise science, and nutrition and dietetics programs. Strategically situated within the William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center, the department benefits from proximity to active clinics specializing in primary care sports medicine, orthopedics, and physical therapy, facilitated by a collaborative partnership with CommonSpirit Health.

*<Add in specific colleges or major offices that support your project. Below are examples>*

Graduate School.The UCCS Graduate School has oversight of all graduate programs at UCCS and provides professional development activities and financial support for graduate students including fellowships, tuition grants, and travel awards. Recruitment staff offer workshops to undergraduate students, alumni, and community members on the graduate school application processing, financing graduate education, GRE preparation, and practice tests and participates in recruitment efforts at various Career & Internship Fairs and Graduate School Fairs in Colorado and across the United States. The Graduate School coordinates and offers workshops for graduate students on a variety of relevant topics including writing an NSF GRFP proposal, writing a thesis, presenting research, maintaining wellness, and mentoring. The Graduate School collaborates with the Office of Research and OSPRI to provide responsible conduct of research workshops. The Graduate School coordinates yearly events for graduate students to present their research including the UCCS Mountain Lion Grad Slam (3-minute research talks) and the Graduate Research Showcase (poster presentations).

*<If you need specific grad school services or materials for your project, please contact the Dean of the Grad School to confirm ability to meet your needs>*

UCCS Library**:** The Kraemer Family Library fosters the intellectual growth of UCCS students, faculty, staff, and our community by developing innovative services, technologies, collections, and spaces that facilitate their emerging information needs. Most library services are available over 100 hours per week during the regular semesters. Individual study carrels, quiet study areas, open computer labs, group study rooms, an assistive technology center, and scanners and copy machines are available. Library users have access to the library’s collection of over 1.3 million books/eBooks, more than 400,000 government documents and maps, and over 8,500 audio-visual items as well as over 170,000 streaming media titles. The library has over 270 databases to choose from and access to over 225,000 full-text online journal titles through various databases. In addition, students and faculty have access to the collections of many of Colorado’s other academic libraries through personal visits, shared electronic catalogs or interlibrary loans. The Library's interlibrary loan agreements also provide students and faculty with access to the collections of most of the libraries in the U.S. and other countries. Services include a comprehensive library instruction program and virtual and in-person research assistance during most hours that the library is open, and many library services are also available to the local community. Access to a wide variety of electronic resources and the Library's online catalog is available through the library web page.

**Additional Kraemer Family Library Services for Students:**

* The Kraemer Family Library hosts the open-access journal [Undergraduate Research Journal](https://urj.uccs.edu/index.php/urj) which features undergraduate student research from all departments on the UCCS campus.
* Peer Review Workshops in conjunction with the Undergraduate Research Journal, highlighting the purpose and etiquette of peer-review
* A subscription to RefWorks for all students and workshops to introduce students to citations and RefWorks.
* Poster Presentation Workshop: How to make a poster for a research conference
* Data Visualization Workshop: How to present data effectively.

*<If you need specific library services or materials for your project, please contact the library staff to confirm their ability to meet your needs>*

Office of Information Technology**:** provides highly centralized computing and communications infrastructure and services to support the campus community in instructional, research, and administrative programs.  OIT provides an innovative, collaborative, and sustainable approach to computing to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community at large.  The Office of Information Technology provides the following services to all students, faculty, and staff:

* 24x7 Help Desk Support
* Redundant, research network connected, high-speed internet connections
* State-of-the-art data centers that have new cooling, battery backup, generators, and Sapphire clean-agent fire suppression
* Data backup
* Collaborative research computing facilities
* Multiple on-campus labs including Centers of Excellence and the Assistive Technology Lab

Applications supported and licensed by OIT:

* Office 365 with 1 TB personal storage
* Collaborative departmental storage with SharePoint
* Qualtrics
* Website deployment through Drupal
* Canvas
* Zoom web conferencing

UCCS is also a leader in cybersecurity and the Office of Information Technology supports many security initiatives and technology such as:

* Multi-factor Authentication
* Robust defense against computer and network-based attacks both on and off campus
* Support for research and industry-based compliance areas such as PCI, HIPAA, and DFARS
* Security awareness for all campus community members.

OIT is concerned with Accessibility to the entire UCCS community and offers Assistive Technology Services.

*<If you need specific technology services or materials for your project, please contact the IT staff to confirm ability to meet your needs>*

*<The below are sample descriptions of other offices and centers on campus that may be relevant for your proposal. Select those that showcase the important resources specific to the needs of your proposal>*

The Office of Research**.** The campus has institutionalized the capacity to provide specific project support through the Office of Research, which is led by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research. The Office of Research oversees the Offices of Sponsored Programs (OSP) and Research Integrity (ORI) and is closely affiliated with the Sponsored Projects Accounting office. The Office of Research provides professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and students on sponsored programs, publication and creative outputs, as well as offers seed grants to support research, reviews limited submission proposals, and coordinates tech transfers. The Office of Research takes the lead on strategic planning efforts related to research, oversees research policies, and implements programs and forums to celebrate the culture of research on campus. The Office of Research also oversees the Center for Student Research and coordinates Mountain Lion Research Week. Moreover, the Office of Research partners with the Graduate School to implement responsible conduct of research training. The Office of Research also provides oversight to the OSP and ORI which handle contract review, post-award management support, IRB review and training for researchers to meet the Common Rule and any relevant requirements for research with human participants, oversight of technology control plans for any projects needing to meet requirements surrounding export controls, as well as other research compliance issues. The Sponsored Projects Accounting office provides financial reporting for projects. The Office of Research disseminates an annual publication on research achievements and research impacts that includes OSP, ORI, and Office of Research metrics.

Research Specific Resources**:** The campus has institutionalized the capacity to provide specific project support through the Offices of Sponsored Programs (OSP) and Research Integrity (ORI), Sponsored Projects Accounting office, and the *<Academic Unit(s) name(s)>*. OSP provides pre-award assistance, contract review, and post-award management support. ORI handles IRB review and training for researchers to meet the Common Rule and any relevant requirements for research with human participants, oversight of technology control plans for any projects needing to meet requirements surrounding export controls, as well as other research compliance. The Sponsored Projects Accounting office provides financial reporting for projects. The <academic unit> has expertise in associated administration of grant activities such as hiring, purchasing, and finance, and is able to allocate research space as needed for project staff and data collection. <Add any other relevant information about support, equipment, etc. that your department/center/college/school provides for your project>

Office of Institutional Research**:** provides institutional and academic support to guide administrative decision-making at UCCS. The IR office collects and analyzes data related to student success, institutional effectiveness, faculty productivity, student learning, and other performance indicators. Responsibilities include reporting to federal and state entities, managing surveys, administering course evaluations, supporting faculty reviews, leading campus data governance, and responding to ad-hoc data requests in addition to analyzing trends in higher education occurring throughout the United States. The IR office has access to Digital Measures, Human Resource Data, Financial and Admissions Data, and subscribes for access to a number of national data bases.  The IR office employs two full time staff and uses an accessible and transparent approach while maintaining data integrity and upholding the privacy and confidentiality of individual unit records. Data reports and aggregated data are available on the IR website.

Office of Communications and Media Relations**:** The office staff serve as the university’s primary liaison with the news media, the principal communicators for internal audiences that include up to 25,000 faculty, staff, students and parents, and works closely with other communications professions within the campus and the University of Colorado system. For external relations with the news media, the university serves as the only research-level institution and largest four-year university in southern Colorado and within the Colorado Springs/Pueblo Nielsen DMA, and works with the second-largest daily in the state, the Colorado Springs Gazette, often serving as the first resource for local-level expert opinion on a wide array of subjects. The office manages the internal newsletter, Communique, that is distributed weekly to internal audiences, and works closely with the CU system’s equivalent publication, CU Connections. Office staff also work closely with the Office of Alumni Relations, which sends out weekly communications to more than 45,000 alumni, and with unit-level professionals across campus to coordinate messaging across colleges and divisions. The social media specialist within the Office of Communications manages the primary institutional social media accounts and works closely with more than 200 account users to align brand, tone and content. Office staff also work closely with members of the University Marketing team and the Media Services team to coordinate photography and video services.

*<Below are sample Center descriptions. Be sure to reach out to that particular center for updated information and ensure they will be part of your project >*

UCCS BioFrontiers Center**:** The UCCS BioFrontiers research center is an interdisciplinary research effort. Since its inception in 2011, UCCS BioFrontiers has provided more than 150 students with opportunities to work on dynamic research projects with our 10 faculty. The UCCS BioFrontiers program is focused primarily on interdisciplinary biophysics and currently involves students and faculty from physics and other disciplines who seek to produce significant new approaches for addressing fundamental molecular biological questions and related health issues. UCCS BioFrontiers is critical because it supports the two main functions of UCCS – teaching and research. UCCS BioFrontiers encourages research by providing high-tech equipment and multidisciplinary seminars to the campus. Research at UCCS BioFrontiers includes super-resolution microscopy research, plasma membrane dynamics, development of magnetic resonance imaging techniques, and synthesis and characterization of nanoparticle probes for imaging and drug delivery. UCCS BioFrontiers encourages teaching by providing research training for students (from high school to PhD) in multidisciplinary research.

Center for Religious Diversity and Public Life**:** The primary aim of the Center for Religious Diversity and Public Life is to foster a healthy and fruitful relationship between the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and the surrounding community as it concerns religious issues and public life. The Center hosts speaker events and partners with the Colorado Diversity Forum, the Citizens Project (a local non-profit promoting equality and respect for diversity with an emphasis on civic engagement), and the Interfaith Youth Core.

The Center for Student Research**:** The Center for Student Research (CSR) started in summer 2019. The Center is operated within Academic Affairs and falls under the Office of Research. The Center is located in a central location for student services. The Center for Student Research is devoted to preparing undergraduate and graduate student investigators across disciplines. The CSR inventories, coordinates, develops, and facilitates research best practices and professional development opportunities for student and their faculty mentors. To date, there are 380 student members and 81 faculty affiliates. Among the programs facilitated by the CSR is the **Undergraduate Research Academy**, which started in 2010, that encourages students to expand their education beyond the classroom through participation in research and creative projects mentored by UCCS faculty. The Academy objective is to support collaborative efforts between the student and faculty member, where both members benefit from the experience. Academy students act as research assistants on meaningful projects identified by their faculty mentor and, through this opportunity, the student gains valuable experience, while being paid a $4,000 stipend, and the faculty member’s research program goals are furthered.

The CSR also coordinates the Aspirational Graduate Peer Mentor Program which includes 7 graduate students from four departments. Each peer mentor underwent training in active listening, how to have difficult conversations, and understanding implicit bias in research settings. The intent of this program is to offer undergraduate and 1st year graduate students near-peer support to help catalyze research careers and the pursuit of graduate studies. We especially aim to serve students who are the first in their families to go to college and those with marginalized/minoritized backgrounds as they are less likely to participate in mentored research experiences.

*<<<Consider Joining the Center for Student Research as a Faculty Affiliate >>>*

UCCS Health Clinics**:** The Lane Center for Academic Health Sciences houses the UCCS HealthCircle Clinics which opened in the spring of 2014 in a highly visible location within the UCCS campus and Colorado Springs community. The Lane Center houses five clinics operated by UCCS as the HealthCircle Clinics, a family medicine primary care clinic operated by Peak Vista Community Health System (Federally Qualified Health Center), and the Colorado Springs Branch of the CU School of Medicine. The clinics are co-located for the purpose of integrating services, educational experiences, and research on enhancing health and wellness. Students and faculty provide services in the clinics that serve primarily academic purposes. A research volunteer database has been collected from patients at these clinics and is available for use by the researchers of the PCORI project upon approval by the IRB. Additionally, there are research rooms available for testing participants in these clinics which are easily accessible with appropriate parking.

*<If you need to use the UCCS Health clinics for your project, please contact the staff in each individual clinic confirm ability to meet your needs>*

UCCS Excel Centers**:** UCCS has four centers that are dedicated to supporting students academically: A Languages Center, Math Center, Multiliteracy Center, and Science Center. All students have access to these centers to ensure that they excel in their coursework and develop lifelong skills in writing, communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. These centers offer individual and group tutoring, as well as group problem solving, review, and study sessions for many courses in science and math. The Centers also offer various workshops in and outside of class to help students improve skills and performance. Importantly, the Excel Centers offer students space to study, relax, meet friends, and grab a free cup of coffee or tea. The Excel Centers are “The Place” for students.

*<If you need to use the Excel Centers for your project, please contact the staff in each individual center to confirm ability to meet your needs>*

UCCS Gateway Program Seminar (GPS): UCCS GPS is one of the first experiences for incoming students. Through GPS, students are exposed to an interdisciplinary curriculum taught by experienced faculty to establish meaningful connections, cultivate an inclusive community, and create a sense of belonging. All GPS courses are heavily faculty-driven, feature the involvement of at least two faculty members from different fields of interest, and feature a range of topics and concepts, such as Mission to Mars, Keep Colorado Springs Weird, and Farm to Kitchen Bootcamp. Additionally, some GPS courses are oriented toward major and career pathways, to engage students who wish to explore a specific topic, such as STEM, business, social work, or healthcare. All entering students (with the exception of transfer students that have more than 30 credit hours) are required to take a GPS course.

T. Rowe Price Career and Innovation Center**:** The T. Rowe Price Career and Innovation Center (formally the UCCS Career Center) has a mission of empowering all students and alumni to design their career journey through innovation and strives to help current students and alumni explore their options, prepare for their future and achieve their career goals. The Career Center provides:

* Career advising appointments
* Career fairs and other career events such as career exposure events, alumni panels, and workshops
* Access to Handshake, a virtual networking app for students and alumni
* Private spaces including the Innovation Lounge, Huddle Rooms, and Interview Rooms

The career center also provides access to Clyde’s Closet, a free, gently used professional clothing closet for UCCS students and alumni to utilize for interviews, career fairs, special events, and everything in between. Students can select up to 7 items per semester (free of charge and no requirement to return the clothing). Clyde’s Closet carries hundreds of clothing items great for any career development event.

*<If you need to use the Career Centers for your project, please contact the staff to confirm ability to meet your needs>*

Mountain Lion Research Day (MLRD)**:** MLRD provides an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students from UCCS to showcase their research and creative works in poster or oral presentation formats. Researchers submit an abstract as individuals or as group presenters before acceptance into the conference. The conference began in 2009 and has continued every year since. This half day event includes over 70 poster presentations by undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty and staff. During the closing ceremonies of the event, the Outstanding Mentor Award is presented to a faculty member demonstrating exceptional ability mentoring students in research and creative works. Additionally, the Top Scholar Award is presented to the winning undergraduate and graduate students for their poster presentations judged by a panel of faculty and staff. The event is attended by campus leadership and well over 150 campus and community members.

Colorado Springs Undergraduate Research Forum (CSURF)**:** CSURF is a collaborative venture designed to highlight the research and creative works of undergraduates from Colorado College, the United States Air Force Academy, and the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS).  The forum started in 2004, and every year the conference rotates between these three institutions. The conference showcases the research by 300-400 students each year, from a wide range of disciplines (with natural sciences and engineering typically the largest fields represented).

**Diversity Support at UCCS**

*<Below are some examples of support offices on campus. There are many more! If you need to use the any of the below for your project, please contact the appropriate staff to confirm ability to meet your needs>*

The Multicultural Office for Student Access Inclusiveness and Community (MOSAIC) and LGBTQ+ Resource Center:  Established in 2003, the MOSAIC emphasizes the importance of community, intellectual enrichment, allyship development, and cultural exploration through collaborations with multicultural student organizations, faculty, staff, community members, and student support services. In 2009, the MOSAIC was reorganized to include the newly established LGBTQ+ Resource Center. The MOSAIC and LGBTQ+ Resource Center provide a critical shared space and entry point for both historically underserved students and equity-minded students. The mission of MOSAIC and the LGBTQ+ is to provide holistic support through the advocacy, ongoing personal development, and community cultivation for historically and currently marginalized UCCS students. The MOSAIC and LGBTQ+ Resource Center impact, however, goes far beyond programs that originate and are housed in that office. They generate relationships across campus that build dialogue, instill pride, and help campus programs benefit historically underserved students. The MOSAIC and LGBTQ+ Resource Center provide:

* Advocacy, leadership development, mentorship, and social support for students from underserved communities with a special emphasis on serving racial and ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, and first-generation students.
* Cultural and identity-based education, workshops, trainings, programs, and events.
* Community meeting, study, meditation, and reflection spaces for students.
* Opportunities for involvement in cultural and identity-based student organizations and support groups.
* Advising and mentorship for cultural and identity-based student organizations (co-support provided by the Department of Student Life and Leadership)
* Resources and support for UCCS Undocumented/DACA/ASSET students
* Basic needs items such as menstrual and sexual health products for students
* Funding for student-led inclusion and equity programming
* Learning community for MOSAIC Gateway Program

MOSAIC and the LGBTQ+ Resource Center also offer signature programs and services including an UndocuPeer Workshop, Safe Zone Training, Know Your Status Clinics, and more.

With a newly renovated space (2021), the MOSAIC and LGBTQ+ Resource Center are now home to an expanded community lounge, two private reflection rooms, and the support of three full-time staff members centrally located on campus. They encourage students to drop-in to relax, engage in enriching conversations, learn about campus resources, culturally explore, and to connect with the Mountain Lion community.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**:** The Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) aspires to strengthen innovation, impacts, and practices as integral components of inclusive and academic excellence. It is committed to fostering an inclusive learning and work environment where all at UCCS feel a sense of belonging and can thrive. The division promotes the principles of inclusive excellence, multicultural education, and social justice that both enhance the University's service to the public and contributes directly to the work environment and the quality of learning for all who participate. Additionally, it seeks to elevate the impact UCCS has as a regional and national leader in preparing students for success in a diverse global society and workforce. The Division of DEI is comprised of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for DEI, the Office of DEI Education and Outreach, the Office of International Affairs, and the Multicultural Office for Student Access, Inclusiveness, and Community (MOSAIC) and LGBTQ+ Resource Center.

President's Fund for Student Diversity**:** supports student programs, events, and travel that contribute to the advancement of campus diversity efforts at the University of Colorado in accord with the UCCS Diversity Strategic Plan. Funds awarded to qualifying student groups or their members are intended to encourage participation in cultural themed conferences and/or professional development opportunities, especially for those underrepresented in their field of study.  
  
Pre-Collegiate Program**:** The Pre-Collegiate Development Program at UCCS is designed to facilitate college readiness among secondary school students and eliminate the need for academic and social remediation in college among first-generation and minority students. Starting in the student’s rising 10th grade summer and concluding the summer before 12th grade, the smooth transition from high school to college is accomplished using career exploration workshops, a summer institute that prepares students to focus on a career pathway, a career-focused concurrent enrollment program offered during the school year and summers, as well as ongoing support to monitor and advise students as they transition through high school into the college major of their choice. When successfully completed, students will have earned up to 30 CU college credits; applied for scholarships and financial aid; been accepted to UCCS; and developed academic and social success skills linked to success in a college environment. PCDP recruits first-generation and low-income students from school districts with a high population of students of color.

Faculty Equity and Inclusion Committee**:** The Faculty Equity and Inclusion Committee (FEIC) addresses the needs of faculty of color on the UCCS campus and advocates for equity, diversity, and inclusion. FEIC advocates for social justice on behalf of minority faculty, staff, and students, and responds to societal issues that affect the campus community. Furthermore, FEIC provides a space for faculty to discuss campus climate, issues related to hiring, retention, and intellectual freedom.

As a standing committee of the UCCS Faculty Assembly, each fiscal year FEIC allocates funds for research and campus activities that promote diversity and inclusiveness, with emphasis on racial/ethnic issues in research, community engagement, and teaching. Funding is open to all UCCS faculty and staff. FEIC offers Diversity Grants in the following two areas of professional development and academic programming:

* Professional development includes, but is not limited to, travel for research, conference presentations, access to archives, research assistance or transcription, or minor equipment purchases. Applications in this category should demonstrate how the event or activity impacts the applicant’s career trajectory.
* Grants award for academic programming and curriculum includes, but is not limited to, creating or supporting on-going programs, bringing speakers to campus, organizing one-time activities or workshops, or developing new or enhancing existing courses. Applications in this category should demonstrate how the event or activity impacts the campus in diversity and inclusion.

Office of Veteran Student Affairs**:** UCCS has earned recognition from multiple sources as a military friendly school. For 2023, UCCS earned a Top Ten Gold Military Friendly ranking of Large Public Institutions and was designated Military Spouse Friendly for the second consecutive year by GI Jobs Victory Media. Over 1700 students utilized VA Education Benefits in 2023 and over 2600 military-affiliated students are currently pursuing their studies at UCCS, both in person and online. UCCS strives to provide transition assistance in the form of financial, social, and academic support for all veteran and military service members and their families. One of the keys to veteran success for military-affiliated students at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs is providing transition support to our students, including through the Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) Program. PAVE is a peer support program that connects incoming student veterans with student veterans already on campus in order to help them navigate college life, identify challenges they are facing, refer them to the appropriate resource on or off campus, and provide ongoing support to their academic and personal ventures. through our TARGET: Success program. This program is designed to empower military-affiliated students through a series of structured and purposeful steps, success coaching, and engagements from Admission to Post-Graduation. In Fall of 2023, UCCS announced the Active Duty Tuition Assistance Grant which bridges the gap between UCCS tuition, fees, and required materials for undergraduate active duty students using Military Tuition Assistance, demonstrating a significant commitment to supporting our military community.

Project CREST**:** Project CREST (Changing Research Experiences, Structures, and (in)Tolerance through the Adaptation of Promising Equity Practices) seeks to improve the research landscape of UCCS today and for the next generation of scholars by adapting evidence-based practices from previously funded NSF ADVANCE projects to our unique university context. Project CREST aims to transform UCCS through two primary initiatives by adapting practices from previous ADVANCE projects to:

1. Positively impact women’s research experiences and productivity;
2. Change the research policies and evaluation structures within the institution to more fully support women’s research participation, and;
3. Vigilantly mitigate biases within UCCS research spaces and research processes. Project CREST focuses on systemic reform efforts that will change the landscape of UCCS today and for the next generation of scholars.

To date, Project CREST accomplished the following top 10 positive impacts to the UCCS campus:

1. Developed an annual review co-creation toolkit as well as an equity-minded annual merit review criteria rubric for more equitable annual review processes.
2. Provided feedback on all the annual review documents and created a report of both our reviews with recommendations for improvements, and a survey of faculty perception of how the creation process went. Results of this follow-up faculty survey demonstrated that faculty were satisfied with the process, feel their documents are inclusive, and report positive expectations for future annual reviews.
3. Hired a faculty fellow who administered Bias Literacy Training to RPT review committee members to help recognize and combat bias in the retention, promotion, and tenure process. To date, 68% of review committee members have taken part in this training.
4. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is now explicitly listed in the RPT policy as evidence for inclusion in the dossier.
5. Awarded 6 mini-grants to women-identified and minoritized faculty in STEM and SBS fields to support their research efforts.
6. Hired a Research Development Coordinator to provide wraparound support for faculty research needs who also runs the in-person Grant-Writing Bootcamps to facilitate grant submissions for minoritized and marginalized faculty and others new to grant writing. The design is adapted from a successful model at Montana State University.
7. Created a Research Facilitation Network, the CREST Belayers, to provide mentoring and valuable programming to mid-career women-identified faculty across all fields.
8. Coordinated a campus wide discussion, including a 21 faculty member Think Tank to reimagine the promotion to full professorship.
9. Reviewed and provided feedback on campus awards and to date, 6 campus awards have been significantly updated to incorporate our feedback to be more inclusive/transparent.
10. Used a CREST-inspired nomination process for distinguished professor resulting in our first woman-identified distinguished professor at UCCS.