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 45,000 military personnel. For 2024, UCCS earned a Top Ten Gold Military Friendly ranking of Large Public Institutions and was designated Military Spouse Friendly for the third consecutive year by GI Jobs Victory Media. UCCS was also designated a 2024 Military Times Best for Vets College.

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 1,897 bachelor’s degrees, 516 master’s degrees, and 48 doctorate degrees during the 2023-2024 academic year. In addition, UCCS awarded nearly 157 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, 35 master’s, and 10 doctoral degree programs across a broad range of disciplines. UCCS faculty composition includes 288 tenured or tenure-track faculty, 217 non-tenure track faculty, 251 Lecturers, adjunct, adjoint, or visiting faculty, 29 clinical faculty, and 10 research faculty as of Fall 2024. In Fall 2024, UCCS welcomed 10,626 students on campus, which included 27% active-duty military personnel, veterans, and family members. Approximately 18% of currently enrolled students are first-generation college students, and 36.6% identify as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group.

In the last decade (2011-2021), 548 UCCS 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 Department of Human Physiology and Nutrition integrates degree programs in biomedical sciences and features a distinguished faculty of ten tenure-track members from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Faculty research spans a broad spectrum, including physiological responses to extreme environmental conditions (e.g., high altitude, heat, cold), sex-specific differences in physiological regulation, metabolic adaptations in health and disease, nutritional strategies to improve quality of life and athletic performance, and the biomechanical analysis of movement in sports and occupational settings.

Serving a growing enrollment of over 600 students across its applied physiology, biomedical science, exercise science, and nutrition and dietetics programs, the department is strategically located in the William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center. This location enables seamless collaboration with active clinical practices in primary care sports medicine, orthopedics, and physical therapy through a 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. 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).

*<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**:** The Office of Information Technology (OIT) partners with faculty, staff and administrators to provide guidance in areas such as security, compliance, data management planning and execution for research grants and proposals. Depending on the research grant proposal OIT also provides direct support for purchasing software and hardware solutions that a grant may require.

Facilities:

OIT maintains centrally located data centers that ensure all research data and equipment can be both physically and environmentally secure. OIT maintains both on-premise and virtual, cloud-based labs for various departments to ensure students have resources they need to perform scholarly activities.

Infrastructure and Software availability:

The department centrally manages HPC resources and provides access to students and faculty via a central ticking system. Cloud-based infrastructure is available on both AWS and Azure and contracts are in place to help procure services should the researcher need them. Microsoft M365 A5 licensing provides extra layers of security should researchers put data into provided environments. Dedicated research storage is available to ensure research data is not on improperly maintained devices as well as backups for the data.

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

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: 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 and regularly partners with the Graduate School and other campus units to support student and faculty researchers. 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. 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. In addition, the CSR hosts workshops for students on leadership principles, graduate school preparation, and grant writing.

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 >>>*

Faculty Resource Center: *<Please reach out directly to the FRC if you plan to incorporate their services and expertise into your grant proposal>* The Faculty Resource Center (FRC) strives to empower UCCS faculty and supports high-quality, universally designed teaching and learning experiences for UCCS faculty. By continuously fostering relationships, providing proactive leadership on effective educational practice, and cultivating innovative learning technology use, the FRC offers meaningful consultation, resources, and training to benefit the entire UCCS community.

To accomplish this mission, the FRC fosters the design of consistent faculty-developed courses, provides innovative and accessible learning technology solutions, and leads in scholarly instructional practices. The FRC offers faculty and staff consultations and training on emerging and existing educational technology, in-person, hybrid, and online teaching, open educational resources, digital accessibility, and instructional media. The FRC also provides opportunities for faculty to model, mentor, and share their research and expertise through faculty-led teaching and mentoring circles, center-sponsored workshop series, training sessions, communities of practice, and campus conferences.

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 that are 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 a poster presentation format. 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, growing in both presenter numbers and attendees each year. This half-day event includes over 90 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 300 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 MOSAIC Office at UCCS:  The MOSAIC Office at UCCS is a student advocated support service designed to cultivate holistic development through community, celebration, and education. It is a physical space on campus that offers a lounge area, two reflection rooms, arts & crafts, personal care and sexual health products, a free library, board & card games, and full-time staff to support students throughout their collegiate journey. The MOSAIC has historically offered programs for all students and has expertise working with populations such as first-generation college students, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, DACA and ASSET students, and students with disabilities.

MOSAIC contributes to and accomplishes student success goals by working with UCCS students to create a healthier campus environment, affirming the unique backgrounds throughout the community, while equipping students with education and practice for life beyond the Bluff. MOSAIC is a place where students can find a sense of community, express themselves, make friends, deepen knowledge, and find support!

The MOSAIC Office at UCCS Offers:

* 3 Reflection Rooms
* Cultural and Identity-Based Individual and Group Advising
* National Heritage and Identity Month Events
* Educational Workshops
* MOSAIC Retreats
* MOSAIC Scholars Program
* MOSAIC Gateway Program
* National First-Generation Week Programming
* Professional Development Workshops
* Student Advisory Groups such as Pride Advisory Assembly and First-Generation Students Advisory Group
* Funding for Campus Climate Initiatives and Events
* Free Personal Care Products and Sexual Health Products
* Free Arts & Crafts Supplies
* Scholarships 101 Workshop
* Monthly Dialogue Circles
* Alumni Networking
* First-Generation, Multicultural, and Lavender Graduates Celebration
* Annual Drag Show
* Annual Disability Open Mic Night

The Office of Strategic Initiatives**:** The Office of Strategic Initiatives will ensure that UCCS will foster a community of learning, engagement, and inclusive belonging to nurture the growth and success of faculty, staff, and students. with the goal of advancing a culture of innovative and inclusive pedagogy that is relevant to the academic and professional needs of today’s students. Cultivating a culture of inclusive excellence that responds to the diversity of our campus community. Deepen curricular and co-curricular experiences to foster global perspective, experiential engagement, and professional preparation. Strengthen our culture of health, safety, and well-being. Learn more about Inclusive Care and Belonging at belonging.uccs.edu

We value INCLUSIVE DIVERSITY as a foundation for teaching and scholarship that prepares students, faculty, staff, and community members for both local and global multicultural realities.

Core Strategy: Foster a Community of Learning, Engagement, and Inclusive Belonging to Nurture the Growth and Success of Faculty, Staff, and Students,

1. Advance a culture of innovative and inclusive pedagogy that is relevant to the academic and professional needs of today’s students.
2. Cultivate a culture of inclusive excellence that responds to the diversity of our campus community.
3. Deepen curricular and co-curricular experiences to foster global perspective, experiential engagement, and professional preparation.
4. Strengthen our culture of health, safety, and well-being.

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 Support and Success Center**:** *<Please reach out directly to PCSSC if you plan to incorporate their services and expertise into your grant proposal>*

The Pre-Collegiate Support and Success Center (PCSSC) is an academic and socio-emotional enrichment program for prioritized middle and high school students in Colorado Springs and Pueblo. We prepare first-generation, low income, and military dependent students to pursue their postsecondary goals.

We accomplish our mission through monthly, after-school on-campus workshops led by college students and professional staff where scholars learn about college preparation and success, soft skills, and self-advocacy, and engage in career exploration. During our Summer Academic Institute in June, students participate in dual enrollment college credit courses, math and writing preparation, community service, and career fairs. Through our quarterly College Experience Program, they visit different types of college campuses while learning what makes each one unique. Families have opportunities to participate in sessions to help support their scholars throughout the year.

Pre-Collegiate Learning Objectives for Scholars and Families:

1. Students will harness academic skills and success strategies.
2. Students will know & advocate for themselves.
3. Students will develop & demonstrate life skills.
4. Families will be equipped with knowledge and support in helping their scholars navigate the PCDP objectives & their post-secondary journey.
5. Students will describe & explore educational systems, their post-secondary options, and how to navigate & pursue opportunities.

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 and Military Affairs**:** UCCS has earned recognition from multiple sources as a military friendly school. For 2024, UCCS earned a Top Ten Gold Military Friendly ranking of Large Public Institutions and was designated Military Spouse Friendly for the third consecutive year by GI Jobs Victory Media. UCCS was also designated a 2024 Military Times Best for Vets College. Over 1900 students utilized VA Education Benefits in 2024 and over 2700 military-affiliated students are currently pursuing their studies at UCCS, both in person and online. UCCS strives to provide transition assistance from military to college life through educational benefits counseling and processing, campus and community engagement, and academic and social support for all veteran and military service members and their families. Individualized success coaching, tutoring, basic needs assistance, and referrals to mental health services are available to all military-affiliated students. 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. Since its inception, UCCS has given over $200,000 in aid to active duty servicemembers in Colorado.

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 9 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, all campus awards have been significantly updated to incorporate our feedback to be more inclusive/transparent.
10. Reviewed and provided feedback on reappointment, promotion, and tenure criteria documents for 6 units across campus.
11. Brought the Engaged Scholarship Consortium to UCCS which offers numerous resources and trainings for faculty whose work involves engagement with the community.

Note: To comply with new EO as of 1/20/2025, CREST is changing the following:

1. We will be archiving all our previous resources, toolkits, reports, and rubrics. They were always meant to stay available as historical records on our website, and are available upon request.
2. We are moving the Belayers Research Network under the umbrella of the Office of Research, which was always our sustainability plan. They will now be known as the OOR Belayers.
3. We are building a new digital footprint that will unveil our new name and our research community-building mission: UCCS Project CREST: **C**hanging **R**esearch **E**xperiences through **S**tructural **T**ransformation.
4. We are renewing our commitment to creating a research ethos of care and supporting the scholarship of engagement. Both require community.
5. Everyone continues to have access to our Research Development Coordinator and grant writing bootcamps through fiscal year 2027. We’ve been saving up in the Office of Research to support this service for a few more years. We hope to have a long-term sustainability plan in place as budget priorities allow.
6. Everyone continues to benefit from transparent annual merit review criteria, clear award nomination processes, and policy, process, resources that value the scholarship of engagement.