After more than three decades of offering tuition-free education to residents, children, and grandchildren of displaced Aurarians—those who were forced to relocate during the building of the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) during a period of urban renewal in Denver—the University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), and the Community College of Denver (CCD) are expanding eligibility to include all direct descendants of Aurarians who lived in the neighborhood from 1955 to 1973.

The Displaced Aurarian Scholarship, which began in the 1990s, is designed to provide funds for tuition and fees for students who were residents of or had family ties to the Auraria neighborhood before AHEC was built in the 1970s. Earlier, this land was the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Ute nations, and served as an epicenter for trade, community, family building, and more. Following a devastating flood in 1965, the city of Denver began a process of urban renewal to create the Auraria Campus, forcibly displacing over 300 households who called the Auraria neighborhood home. As part of the relocation, these residents were compensated for their homes and promised free education for years to come through the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship. The original scholarship was limited to the children and grandchildren of displaced Aurarians. By changing eligibility to direct descendants, the scholarship will now be available to all lineal descendants of Displaced Aurarians in perpetuity at each institution.

“This is one step toward a multi-faceted, long-term effort to honor and support the displaced Aurarians and the sacrifices they made of their homes, families, and livelihood,” said CU Denver Chancellor Michelle Marks, PhD. “We are pleased to expand this program to any direct descendant, in perpetuity, truly fortifying our position as a ‘university for life.’ We are committed to our role as an equity-serving institution and investing in the future of our surrounding neighborhoods, serving Colorado’s Hispanic and Indigenous communities, and supporting the education of displaced Aurarians and their families, now and into the future. I want to thank CU Regent Nolbert Chavez for his leadership in this work and for the entire Board of Regents for their support.”

“MSU Denver has proudly served multiple generations of Auraria families, and I am thrilled that we will continue to honor their legacy and this community by offering access to a high-quality, enriching education,” said President Janine Davidson, PhD. “It is vital to our University mission to recognize those who came before and set an ambitious course for assuring all descendants of the Aurarian community have access to education, also reaffirming our ongoing commitment to equity and restorative justice at all levels of the University.”

Since the inception of the scholarship program, CU Denver has awarded more than $3.4M in financial aid, allowing 600 displaced Aurarians to attend their university tuition-free. MSU has awarded $1.4M for 305 students and, since 2006, CCD has awarded $627,815 for 136 students.

“It is important to listen to the oral history from the close-knit, diverse West side neighborhoods of early Denver,” said Marielena DeSanctis, PhD, president of the Community College of Denver. “Remembering this history is vital to honoring the intergenerational legacy and the heart and spirit of the people of Auraria. CCD is pleased to expand this scholarship in a way that continues that legacy and brings together the generations that once lived in Auraria with those seeking a post-secondary education on this beautiful campus.”
Direct descendants of individuals who were displaced and removed from Auraria are eligible for the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship, through any of the three institutions starting with the Spring 2022 semester. CCD’s scholarships will be disbursed based on availability of funding.

Colleen Walker, CEO of the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC), notes that as one of the two original settlements in the mid-1800s that later formed greater Denver, Auraria nurtured immigrants, businesses, and families. She said she fully supports the opportunity to recognize the community and families who lived, worked, and worshipped at Auraria.

“The decision to use this historically rich location in order to create a permanent home for Community College of Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and University of Colorado Denver was controversial and complex,” Walker said. “The Displaced Aurarians Scholarship honors the sacrifice of Aurarians and acknowledges their contribution for public higher education to flourish in Denver.”

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**About the Auraria Campus of Higher Education**

The Auraria Campus is a dynamic academic environment shared by three separate and distinct institutions of higher learning – Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver). The Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) is a separate state entity whose role is to provide and manage shared services, facilities, and property to support these prominent institutions in achieving their goals. The collective student population is nearly 42,000, with approximately 5,000 faculty and staff. To learn more about the Auraria Campus, visit [www.ahec.edu](http://www.ahec.edu).

**About Community College of Denver**

Community College of Denver (CCD) is a leading point of entry to higher education for the city and county of Denver. CCD provides cost-effective, high-quality college education, along with access and opportunity for non-traditional students, workforce development, training resources for local organizations, and community partnerships. CCD is a federally funded Hispanic Serving and designated Military Friendly Institution. Learn more at [ccd.edu](http://ccd.edu).

**About Metropolitan State University of Denver**

As one of Colorado’s leading public universities, Metropolitan State University of Denver is reimagining what is possible in higher education through the power of access, diversity, excellence and innovation. Founded in 1965, MSU Denver offers high-value, real-world education to nearly 18,000 students through career- and community-focused bachelor’s and master’s degree programs. And 80% of our 100,000 alumni live and work in Colorado, advancing their communities and the state economy. Based in the heart of the Mile High City, MSU Denver’s thriving urban campus provides unparalleled access to internships and professional networks that jump-start careers. See what’s possible, visit [msudenver.edu](http://msudenver.edu).

**About University of Colorado Denver**

CU Denver is Denver’s partner in progress and ally in innovation. Our connection to our vibrant city inspires leading research, creative work, and civic engagement. Our collaboration with Denver’s businesses and local government helps set us apart from other universities. With a history that began in 1912, CU Denver has operated independently since 1973. Our location in downtown Denver serves more than 15,000 students. In Colorado and around the world, our talented graduates form a diverse and growing Lynx family. We work to create welcoming and respectful learning environments where a culture of inclusion can flourish. At CU Denver, we honor our diversity of experiences and perspectives in the committed belief that they enrich the educational experience for all. For more information, visit [www.ucdenver.edu](http://www.ucdenver.edu).