

**2023 State of the Campus Address
Delivered by Don Elliman, Nov. 16, 2023**

Introduction: At the Forefront

Good afternoon. It's great to see so many here and more joining online. Welcome to State of the Campus 2023.

At CU Anschutz, our goal is to be at the very forefront of innovation in health and medicine. Here, we seek to hire architects and dreamers – leaders who are shaping the healthcare landscape and bringing new ideas to life.

We've built something spectacular together: a dynamic and growing campus, a place driven by bright minds crafting new solutions and changing lives, and a place where the future healthcare workforce trains to lead what's next in modern medicine. We've grown rather quickly into a leading academic medical campus, and we continue to grow, innovate and evolve.

As we build on that strong foundation, we also recognize that we are facing a changing landscape, requiring us to lean on one another and our partners and to adapt in new, sometimes difficult, but often exciting ways.

We have every reason for optimism as we move forward.

An Uncommon Position

We're in an uncommon position today among today's academic medical centers. We continue to steadily build on a solid foundation in each of our three mission areas, and we still have plenty of room to grow and expand.

We have a great set of assets. We are the only academic medical center in the region. We have leading education and training programs. We have a tremendous ecosystem as a research and innovation hub. We have two top-ranked affiliate hospitals providing world-class care. We have strong connections with industry, government and community partners.

Just look at some of our metrics.

- Last year, you attracted over \$867 million in sponsored research funding and gifts last year, \$704 million of it in research awards alone and \$163 million in research gifts. One example is from earlier this fall when the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences

Institute (CCTSI) received \$54 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over seven years to advance biomedical research and training across Colorado. This is the fourth consecutive time that the NIH has funded the CCTSI.

- In clinical care, with our hospital partners Children's Hospital Colorado and UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, we had more than 2.1 million patient visits treating people of all ages on this campus coming from every one of Colorado's 64 counties with patient-centered, high-quality care. The CU School of Medicine faculty alone treated nearly 750,000 unique patients last year.
- Student enrollments are very strong, with 4,518 future leaders pursuing degrees through our more than 40 health professional programs.
- In terms of revenue, we nearly reached \$3 billion last year, up by more than 50% over the last five years.
- Philanthropic is key. Early this year we hit a milestone: \$2 billion in private dollars raised since 2015 for our campus. Last year alone, we raised \$245 million, and we surpassed 200 faculty chairs. While these philanthropic numbers are impressive, every gift – no matter the size – represents a vote of confidence among our community for the work that we do.

Our forward momentum in these areas and many others is because of you – the people in this room and watching remotely. Our foundation as a campus – everything we are – is due to the talent of our faculty and staff, and the dedication and drive of our students. For that, we thank you.

Our Economic Lifeblood

While we are in a place of strength, as I noted, we face a shifting landscape. Many of our economic underpinnings are under pressure.

To sustain momentum and ready ourselves for the future, we need to consider our traditional sources of revenue:

- Tuition: While our education mission is the core of who we are, tuition barely covers the cost of the service it provides, so it's not really a leverage point for the campus as a whole.
- Research: We've grown research tremendously and must continue to do that. But we lose money on research, and it needs to be supported to be sustained.
- State support: Colorado remains among the lowest in the country in state support for our health science schools, and there's no chance on the horizon for change.
- Philanthropy: White philanthropic support is a bright spot and makes a substantial impact, it cannot sustain the campus on its own.
- Clinical margins
- Affiliate support

Combined, these sources are the economic lifeblood of the campus. But when you really distill it down, the two largest variable sources that sustain us are support from our hospital partners

and clinical margins. Both of these sources are under huge pressure, due to efforts to lower healthcare costs. At the state level, the legislature took a shot at facility fees and the concept that community benefit might not include support for education or research – if either of those had happened, the target would have been the hospitals but the impact would have been felt largely by us.

What these realities point to is the imperative for innovation.

Innovation & Risk Tolerance

Revenue Diversification & Science

The key to our strength, and what differentiates us from our peers, is just that – innovation. I'd argue it's our mantra. To be truly innovative, we must have a healthy tolerance for risk. We need to be in the game.

Let's look at some examples.

OncoVerity is a joint venture with UCHHealth and a pharmaceutical company in Belgium called argenX. With a focus on new therapeutic options for acute myeloid leukemia and work based on our science, we really have a chance to change the game for those patients. We are taking a calculated risk, but the potential benefit for human lives is enormous. Our fingers are crossed.

We're also creating a company called RefinedScience – another joint venture with UCHHealth. We're taking the platform and others like it that helped create OncoVerity and combining data science with AI and basic science like single cell omics, and applying it with partners against potential new targets across a broad range of opportunities.

Both of those examples are ways of creating new revenue streams, and they could be significant revenue streams.

We have many other exciting initiatives. One of them is the Anschutz Acceleration Initiative. It was made possible with a gift of \$50 million from our longstanding philanthropic partner, The Anschutz Foundation. It's designed to speed healthcare solutions that are ready to make a direct patient impact in the clinic in the next three to five years. Your ambitious ideas have been inspiring, and the response has been impressive. We got 165 letters of intent and invited 76 back for full proposals. We're in the throes of evaluating those to send them to an external review board in December, and hope to announce the winners early in January.

After launching the Gates Institute last spring with renewed investments in regenerative and cell- and gene-based therapies, the Gates Institute and GBF teams have quickly ramped up. They are taking next-generation therapeutics from concepts to clinic and to market, and the prospects are eye opening.

With our investment in bioinformatics, including the creation of the Department of Biomedical Informatics and Center for Health AI, we put our stake in the ground at the forefront of an emerging field that we believe is a critical part of so much of what will move healthcare forward in the next decade.

Another bright spot is our own investments in early-stage research through programs like AB Nexus, SPARK/REACH and Gates Grubstake. This spring, we made our sixth round of awards through AB Nexus – an intercampus program designed to foster multidisciplinary research collaborations between our experts and colleagues at CU Boulder. In less than three years, 48 teams spanning 40 areas of expertise have secured more than \$15 million in external grants to further advance their work. That pipeline is still flowing.

Programs like these are vital, as research dollars are harder and harder to come by. We can continue to elevate our competitive profile with creative and team-based approaches, leveraging the Office of Research Development, CU Innovations, Advancement, and one another to tap into new funding sources.

It's clear that industry partners are eager to help take your novel ideas to clinic and to market, with CU Innovations playing a central role. Our faculty have launched 33 companies, filed 1,805 patents and developed 1,087 inventions since 2016. Our accolades include "Top 5 Innovation Hub" by the National Institutes of Health and "#4 Leading Academic Institution" by the Nature Innovation Index.

Each of these efforts and investments represents opportunity – to grow our enterprise, to change the science of what we do, and to change the economics of our campus.

Innovating Across Mission Areas

Innovation goes beyond revenue diversification and pure science, to every element of our mission.

Education & Training

When it comes to education and training, we're strengthening our curriculum and expanding our reach in creative ways.

The School of Medicine has launched a dramatic new longitudinal curriculum. We have new pathway programs in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Physical Therapy. The College of Nursing has a partnership with Fort Lewis College in Durango to train nurses in the Four Corners Region, and we have a new rural midwifery initiative.

We have a new state-of-the-art simulation hub at the School of Dental Medicine that opening this spring. If you have a chance to visit it, I encourage you to do so. The College of Nursing recently expanded its simulation space, making it the largest nursing simulation facility in the Rocky Mountain region.

Health Equity & Diversity

We are also bringing this mindset to health equity and diversity initiatives, and to our focus on deepening ties among our community.

One example is the Aurora Wellness Community, led by the School of Medicine, for which temporary clinical space at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center is slated to open early in 2024.

Our Center for Health Equity will work in partnership with the Aurora Wellness Community to take action in areas including training, service, research and advocacy. We will officially welcome the center's first executive director, Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, in January.

On campus, we've taken steps to strengthen connectedness and belonging with events like Community Circles; Heritage, History & Awareness Months; and Pride celebrations.

Mental Health & Wellness

We are advancing creative new solutions and increasing our capacity in mental health and wellness.

Telemental health is a burgeoning area enabling us to reach more people and families throughout the state of Colorado.

We're breaking new ground in treating chronic back pain, as recently featured on the TODAY show, with drug-free "pain reprocessing therapy" – giving new hope to millions who are suffering.

At UCHHealth University of Colorado Hospital's new tower, a modern 40-bed behavioral health wing designed specifically for delivery of the highest standard of care just opened.

We are supporting Colorado educators and students through programs including Traverse Academy at Cherry Creek Schools.

In all these areas and so many more, we are not only delivering on our distinctive and noble mission, but also carrying forward the vision for what this campus could become and laying the groundwork for all that lies ahead.

Change, Challenges & New Opportunities

You know, we've been pretty lucky. We've been remarkably stable as a campus. We've had a team that's largely held together, bolstered by some really outstanding recruits.

That landscape is also shifting a bit now, and we have many new opportunities to look forward to.

On the leadership front, we are fortunate to have new remarkable leaders in two of our schools, and we're grateful for all they are bringing to their roles. We welcomed Dean Jennifer Richer, PhD, to the Graduate School in February, and Dean Cathy Bradley, PhD, to the Colorado School of Public Health in August.

We announced last month that John J. Reilly, Jr., MD, intends to retire as dean of the School of Medicine and vice chancellor for health affairs, and the launch of a national search for his successor.

We will have many opportunities in the months ahead to pay tribute to John, but I want to acknowledge now how much his leadership has meant.

This place is very different from 2015, when John joined us from the University of Pittsburgh. We are far, far stronger by every measure. John gets a great deal of credit for that.

The School of Medicine and campus as a whole experienced extraordinary growth over these nine years – from research awards to patient volume to you name it.

The school has attracted record numbers of applicants and increased diversity among enrolled students.

It has grown the faculty by more than half, and played a significant role in increasing the number of endowed chairs – attracting and retaining exceptional leaders in their fields and physician-researchers of the highest caliber.

John recruited 14 new dept chairs and boosted the school into the leading ranks of women in leadership, with 50% of our 24 depts now led by women.

Behind these achievements is John's steady leadership and focused vision on how to take the school, and our university, to new heights.

John couldn't be here today. He was called to a meeting with a senior delegation from Washington to advise them on issues facing our neighbor to the east. But I couldn't let this occasion pass without acknowledging his contributions and my gratitude to have had his partnership.

Moving Forward With Our Hospital Partners

As we move forward into the future together, we've got to remember that we also rise and fall with our hospital partners. In so many ways, we are inextricably linked. We feed and are fed by one another's setbacks and successes.

We are fortunate to have such strong partners in Children's Hospital Colorado and UCHealth and University of Colorado Hospital. Let's hear from them now.

[**VIDEO: Shared Missions, Shared Successes: Children's Hospital Colorado CEO Jena Hausmann**](#)

[**VIDEO: More Than the Sum of Our Parts: UCHealth CEO Liz Concordia**](#)

Thank you, Jena, thank you Liz. We look forward to continuing the work that we do together as we pursue a shared vision for what this campus is and can be, and a shared commitment to those under our care.

Our North Star

With both opportunities and challenges ahead, how do we build on the foundation we've established to reach what's next? We simply remember our North Star – why we're all here: to educate the next generation, to discover and reinvent the healthcare of tomorrow, and to provide the highest-quality care that enriches lives today.

Outstanding Students: Dr. Sondus Alkadri

We attract outstanding students who are deeply dedicated to becoming future leaders in their fields. One of those students is Dr. Sondus Alkadri.

The accomplished dentist and mother from Syria came to the CU School of Dental Medicine to take part in the Advanced Standing International Student Program, which enables people with dentistry credentials earned in other countries to come to the U.S. and earn their DDS through an accelerated training program.

With a background spanning continents, Sondus's education took her to five dental schools around the world prior to our campus. She fled war-ravaged Syria for Saudi Arabia as a single mother with a toddler in tow.

The first woman in her family to travel abroad for higher education, Sondus remained focused on pursuing her dreams. She chose the CU School of Dental Medicine for her third dental degree, and has thrived during her time here. She has expanded her expertise in digital dentistry, including 3D printing, and honed her skills in medically complex and emergency patient care. She passed her board exams last month with flying colors, and after graduation next month she plans to practice in Colorado, where she has built a life with her husband, young son and daughter.

Please welcome Dr. Sondus Alkadri.

Collaboration to Advance Science: Drs. Traci Lyons & Virginia Borges

A big part of what makes our campus such a special place is a strong spirit of collaboration and commitment to advancing science to better people's lives. These qualities are evident in the work of Traci Lyons, PhD, to create new therapeutic options for women with breast cancer.

Traci joined us in 1999 as a professional research assistant in microbiology, later completing her doctoral studies in pathology and postdoctoral fellowship in the lab of Virginia Borges, MD, who leads our Young Women's Breast Cancer Translational Program. There, Traci began pursuing answers to questions about what drives highly aggressive breast cancers in postpartum women.

She discovered that a particular molecule called semaphorin 7a appears to drive breast cancer spread and may be the key targetable biomarker in cancers that are otherwise resistant to standard treatment. On the heels of this discovery, Dr. Lyons and Dr. Borges have formed a startup biotech company – Pearl Scientific – to develop a novel drug targeting the molecule, offering promise for thousands of women with postpartum and other aggressive forms of breast cancers. The team is within striking distance of a clinical trial.

Last fall, the American Cancer Society recognized Traci for her breakthrough discovery as a major step forward in cancer prevention and treatment.

Let's acknowledge members of their lab and team who are here tonight.

Leading in Patient-Centered Care: Josh Bryan

Our campus is a leader in patient-centered, team-based care informed by the latest science and technology. There are thousands of stories each year of patients who benefit from life-changing outcomes at our hospital facilities. I'd like to share with you the story of one of those patients – Aurora native Josh Bryan.

In 2016, Josh took a trip to Thailand to celebrate his first successful year in business. In a few short seconds, a terrible scooter accident turned Josh's life upside down. Both of Josh's femurs

were badly broken. He narrowly escaped becoming a double amputee. He was wracked with infection and in excruciating pain.

Thankfully, Josh's wife, Melissa, is a nurse at UCHHealth University of Colorado Hospital. She flew to Thailand to help him heal his infections enough to fly home, where he came under the treatment of the Limb Restoration Program team here on our campus.

Nathan Donaldson, DO, performed a rare and innovative procedure that saved enough of Josh's left leg to give him a chance to walk again. From there, Josh eagerly began the transition from wheelchair to crutches to a socket prosthesis, which brought a new set of challenges.

[VIDEO: Life and Limbs Restored: Josh Bryan's Story](#)

Please welcome Josh, Melissa, Jason Stoneback, MD, and members of the care team here tonight.

Closing: Tremendous Possibilities

Stories like Sondus's, Traci's and Josh's are why we are all here. They demonstrate the tremendous possibilities available on our growing and thriving academic medical campus, where bright minds collaborate at the forefront of innovation.

I said today that the landscape is shifting. The changes and opportunities ahead will require us to adapt, evolve and innovate. We've proven again and again that those are the very areas in which we excel.

It's an honor to work alongside you as we build our future together. I hope you share my excitement for what's next.

As we prepare for Thanksgiving next week, please accept my deepest gratitude on behalf of our campus community and those we serve. Thanks for all you do each and every day to make CU Anschutz a truly amazing place.

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