



Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

2024–25 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of Graduate Access & Retention
Operationalizing Strategic Imperative One

ACCESS | RECRUITMENT | RETENTION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2024–2025 Annual Report | Office of Graduate Access & Retention

01

Director's Overview

02

Access:
Summer Multicultural Access to Research Training

03

Recruitment:
Colorado Advantage

04

Recruitment:
National Conference Outreach and Strategic Partnerships

05

Retention:
Boulder Black Blossoms

06

Retention:
Hidden Curriculum, Mentoring, and Department Engagement

07

Institutional Significance

DIRECTOR'S OVERVIEW

2024–25 Annual Report | Office of Graduate Access & Retention

The Graduate School committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse graduate student body, expanding relationships with Minority-Serving Institutions, strengthening mentoring and advising, improving graduate student climate, and increasing pathways from master's to doctoral study. The Office of Graduate Access & Retention advanced these commitments through coordinated, measurable work across access, recruitment, and retention.



CHRISTINA ALSTON, PHD

DIRECTOR

	<h2>1 SMART</h2> <p>Commitment: Expand access to doctoral preparation through high-quality research experiences and inclusive mentorship.</p> <p>Action: GAR hosted 21 undergraduates in SMART and provided faculty-mentored research, graduate preparation, and structured mentorship.</p> <p>Results: 72% of participants reported strong or very strong intent to pursue graduate study at CU Boulder. Mentor engagement was sustained, with 100% of graduate men</p>
	<h2>2 Colorado Advantage and National Outreach</h2> <p>Commitment: Improve recruitment yield and expand relationships with Minority-Serving Institutions and national partners.</p> <p>Action: GAR implemented Colorado Advantage as a structured recruitment experience grounded in faculty engagement and application preparation, while expanding national outreach through recruitment conferences and partner institutions.</p> <p>Results: GAR attended national conferences and 3 concertum/business meetings focused on underserved populations in STEM. GAR added more than 10,000 prospective MS and PhD students names to CU Boulder. GAR Colorado Advantage received 437 applications across the 2023 and 2024 program years, hosted 27 participants, and 26 participants applied to CU Boulder graduate programs. Of those applicants, 14 were admitted and 8 enrolled.</p>
	<h2>3 Boulder Black Blossoms and Hidden Curriculum</h2> <p>Commitment: Improve graduate student climate and strengthen persistence through community, mentoring, and advising transparency.</p> <p>Action: GAR implemented Boulder Black Blossoms and Hidden Curriculum programming.</p> <p>Results: BBB served 16 graduate students, achieved 100% cohort retention, and supported 2 master's-to-doctoral transitions.</p>
	<h2>4 Evidence of Impact and Measurement Approach</h2> <p>BBB outcomes were assessed using a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design that collected pre- and post-program reflections from 16 participants and coded responses across four belonging constructs: peer mentorship, cultural healing, emotional support, and radical self-care. A paired-samples t test was conducted using the construct as the unit of analysis ($n = 4$). Using $\alpha = 0.5$ as the significance threshold, the increase was statistically significant, $t(3) = 13.00$, $p = 0.01$.</p>
	<h2>5 Institutional Impact</h2> <p>Across 2024-2025, GAR strengthened CU Boulder's ability to attract talented scholars, convert prospective applicants into enrolled graduate students, and retain graduate students through evidence-informed belonging and mentoring strategies.</p>



Summer Multicultural Access to Research Training 2024

Expanding Early Research Access and Graduate Intent

SMART connects talented undergraduates from across the nation with research, mentorship, and community at CU Boulder, preparing them for success in graduate school and beyond.



21

Undergraduates Completed



72%

strong/very strong intent to pursue graduate study



100%

graduate mentor return intent



88%

Faculty mentor re-engagement intent



SMART strengthens doctoral access by expanding national partnerships and increasing graduate study intent among research-trained undergraduates.



RECRUITMENT

Colorado Advantage Program Years 2023 & 2024
Applicant to Enrollment Yield as of June 2025



437

Applications Received



27

Program Participants



26

Applied to CU Boulder
Graduate Programs (96.29%)



14

Admitted into Master's &
PhD Programs (53.84%)



8

Enrolled
(57.14% of admits)



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Colorado Advantage converted high-potential applicants into enrolled graduate students through structured faculty engagement and application preparation.

RECRUITMENT

2024–25 Annual Report | Office of Graduate Access & Retention

National Conference Outreach and Strategic Partnerships

Expanding Relationships and Graduate Student Interest

10,000+
Prospective MS and
PhD Student Contacts



5

National Conferences



3

Consortium /
Business Meetings



National Conference Engagement
Connecting with future graduate scholars



Consortium & Meeting
Building alignment and shared impact



Strategic Partnership
Strengthening institutional connections



Commitment:

Expand relationship with Minority- Serving Institutions, national STEM networks, and Colorado partner partner institutions to strengthen graduate recruitment.



Action:

GAR represented CU Boulder through national recruitment conferences, consortium meetings, and institutional partnerships focused on students from groups underrepresented in graduate education.



Results:

ABRCMS, SACNAS NSBE, GEM, McNair Promising Practices, Leadership Alliance, National Name Exchange, and the Fort Lewis College, Partnership expanded outreach and contributed to graduate student interest and SMART participation.



Institutional Impact:

GAR expanded CU Boulder's national reach and strengthened relationships with students, faculty and partner institutions.

Boulder Black Blossoms (2024–2025)

Belonging, Visibility, and Persistence

Boulder Black Blossoms aims to support the lived and individual experiences and achievements of Black women. This program is open to all CU Boulder graduate students in STEM or Education and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, political philosophy, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in accordance with state, federal, and Regent law.



16

Graduate Students
in STEM Cohort



100%

Cohort
Retention



3

Graduated
Blossoms



2

Master-to-PhD
Transitions



350+

Students, Staff,
and Faculty Engaged



Evidence of Impact

Outcomes were assessed using pre- and post-program reflections from 16 participants. Responses were coded across four belonging constructs: peer mentorship, cultural healing, emotional support, and radical self-care. Using $\alpha = .05$ as a significance threshold, a paired-samples t test showed a statistically significant increase, $t(3) = 13.00, p = .001$.



Institutional Impact

BBB demonstrates how culturally grounded mentoring and community-building can strengthen belonging, persistence, and academic confidence.

RETENTION + INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Hidden Curriculum, Mentoring, and Department Engagement

Making Graduate Expectations Visible



Hidden Curriculum and Mentoring



COMMITMENT

Strengthen mentoring, advising, and early graduate student success by increasing transparency around graduate school expectations.



ACTION

GAR supported graduate students through Hidden Curriculum programming focused on unspoken academic norms, advisor communication, professional expectations, goal setting, and graduate school navigation.



RESULTS

Monthly learning and mentoring opportunities were created for GAR Fellows and first-year graduate students, semester check-ins strengthened connection to GAR and campus resources.



INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

Students gained clarity and confidence in navigating academic expectations.



Faculty and Department Engagement



COMMITMENT

Increase shared responsibility for graduate recruitment and retention across departments.



ACTION

GAR coordinated faculty participation in SMART, Colorado Advantage, fellowship nominations, and departmental retention activities.



RESULTS

88% faculty mentor re-engagement intent in SMART; faculty participated in research mentoring, applicative review, faculty meetings, and lab visits, departments contributed to recruitment and fellowship processes.



INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

GAR helps shift recruitment and retention from isolated program activity to shared institutional practice.



INSTITUTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

What GAR's 2024–2025 Outcomes Demonstrate

Access | Recruitment | Retention | Capacity



GAR's 2024–2025 outcomes demonstrate measurable institutional movement across access, recruitment, retention, and capacity. This work turns Graduate School commitments into practice.

What This Means



Access

What the Outcomes Show

Students are not only learning about graduate school; they are developing stronger graduate intent through research, mentoring, and belonging.

Why It Matters

CU Boulder becomes visible as a place where talented undergraduates can imagine themselves as future graduate scholars.



Recruitment

What the Outcomes Show

Prospective applicants move from interest to application, admission, and enrollment when faculty engagement and application preparation are structured intentionally.

Why It Matters

Recruitment becomes a coordinated strategy rather than a one-time event.



Retention

What the Outcomes Show

Belonging, mentoring, and community can be measured and strengthened through intentional programming.

Why It Matters

Graduate climate becomes something the institution can assess, improve, and sustain.



Capacity

What the Outcomes Show

Faculty, departments, graduate mentors, and GAR staff are contributing to shared recruitment and retention outcomes.

Why It Matters

Responsibility for graduate student success moves from one office to a broader institutional practice.



Strategic Takeaway

GAR is advancing the Graduate School's commitments in concrete and measurable ways.

- Expanding access to doctoral preparation
- Strengthening national recruitment relationships
- Converting prospective applicants into enrolled graduate students
- Supporting master's-to-doctoral transitions
- Building evidence-informed retention models
- Increasing mentoring and departmental engagement



What Comes Next

1. **Longitudinal tracking** — Track SMART, Colorado Advantage, and conference contacts from first engagement through application, admission, enrollment, and persistence.
2. **Department-facing recruitment data** — Provide departments with clearer information about prospective student engagement, application behavior, and yield.
3. **Retention evaluation and reporting** — Continue measuring belonging, mentoring, climate, and persistence across GAR-supported programs.
4. **Faculty and mentor development** — Expand tools, expectations, and training that strengthen inclusive mentoring and advising practices.
5. **Graduate student progression** — Increase structured support for master's students considering doctoral study.

How GAR Advances Graduate School Commitments

	Graduate School Commitment	GAR Action	Institutional Significance	Next Step
	Recruit a diverse graduate student body	Provides research access, applicant engagement, and national outreach	Builds early graduate interest and strengthens CU Boulder's visibility among talented scholars	Track students from first contact through application and enrollment
	Expand relationships with Minority-Serving Institutions and national partners	Engages conferences, consortia, and partner institutions	Creates sustained recruitment relationships beyond one-time outreach	Formalize partner engagement calendar and follow-up strategy
	Improve recruitment yield	Connects prospective applicants with faculty, labs, students, and application preparation	Converts interest into applications, admissions, and enrollment	Share recruitment outcomes with departments earlier in the cycle
	Strengthen mentoring and advising	Supports faculty mentors, graduate mentors, and Hidden Curriculum programming	Builds shared capacity for transparent, inclusive graduate education	Develop mentor toolkits and advising transparency resources
	Improve graduate student climate	Implements Boulder Black Blossoms and belonging-centered programming	Demonstrates that belonging can be strengthened and measured	Expand evaluation of belonging and climate across GAR programs
	Increase master's-to-doctoral transitions	Provides cohort support, mentoring, and visibility for doctoral pathways	Supports continued graduate progression within CU Boulder	Build targeted master's-to-PhD engagement strategy