

ALL IN!

August 2026 Edition



IN! is guided by the belief that every student deserves access to the benefits of higher education. For students with intellectual disability (ID), access means more than simply being admitted to college; it also means having the necessary resources and support to participate, persist, and succeed.

In this edition of ALL IN!, we're celebrating the many ways we create access across Colorado.

From expanding inclusive higher education into new regions, to increasing financial access through federal aid and scholarships, to celebrating students whose lives have been transformed by these opportunities, every story in this edition reflects the same belief: **when barriers are removed, students thrive.**



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Join us at the Tailgate!



ARE YOU ALL IN?!

Join IN! as we continue advancing inclusive higher education pathways for students with intellectual disability!

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TODAY





School Highlight

The Process of Access: From Vision to Reality at Colorado State University

In 2023, Colorado State University (CSU) joined the ever-evolving inclusive higher education (IHE) landscape with the establishment of RAM Scholars, which expands regional access in Northern Colorado for students with ID. As one of IN!'s first Inclusive Higher Education Opportunities grant recipients, RAM Scholars launched with strong community support, cross-campus champions, and a leadership team dedicated to moving inclusive higher education in Fort Collins from an idea to a reality.

From the very beginning, RAM Scholars took an innovative approach to inclusive higher education with a focus on career development in the STEM and Agriculture fields. Through hands-on coursework and immediate experience within agriculture settings, students are prepared to meet the vocational needs of the surrounding community. Dr. Deborah Fidler, Co-director of the program, states, "In this region, we know that agriculture is a real employment opportunity for our scholars. They are able to learn technical skills in agriculture that look just like where they hopefully will be employed after the program."

With an unwavering commitment to ensure equal access for students with ID, RAM Scholars began to show CSU and the surrounding community the incredible potential of inclusive higher education.

"We truly appreciate the entire IN! team for the original funding opportunity, the active support as we launched and learned, and for the continuing coordination to advance inclusive higher education across the state!"

- James Graham, Co-Director of RAM Scholars

As scholars became active members of campus, coursework, and career experiences, the institution embraced them. Each year, the program has continued to expand: academic offerings have grown, internship experiences now span multiple campus departments, and more faculty members are seeking opportunities to teach and mentor students. **What started with a small group of champions has grown into a campus-wide culture of inclusion.**

This past spring, CSU RAM Scholars celebrated its very first graduating class! The many accomplishments of their six inaugural graduates represent years of planning, partnership, and perseverance. Their graduation is cause for celebration and is a reminder that creating access is a worthwhile process. It takes dedicated faculty, campus leaders, community partners, and students who are willing to embrace something new together.

The success of RAM Scholars demonstrates that increasing access is about more than simply opening doors to new inclusive higher education opportunities. It's also about building a campus culture where students with intellectual disabilities are welcomed, challenged, and recognized as valued members of the community. As Colorado continues expanding inclusive higher education opportunities, CSU demonstrates what's possible when a community commits to creating access for all.



Prevention Research Center
College Of Agricultural Sciences
Center for Community Partnerships

Scholar Highlight



Access Creates Opportunity:

Reilly's Journey from UCCS Student to Emmy Award Winner

When Reilly McCluskey graduated from the [Office of Inclusive Services at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs \(UCCS\)](#) in 2022, he left with far more than a college certificate. He gained the confidence, skills, and experiences that would open doors to opportunities he once only imagined, including contributing to an Emmy Award-winning film.

Recently, Reilly celebrated an incredible accomplishment as an audio producer on the short film ["On Loneliness."](#) which received a Regional Emmy Award for Outstanding Societal Concerns. For Reilly, the recognition is exciting, but he knows the journey began long before the award ceremony.

When IN! caught up with Reilly to hear more about this phenomenal achievement, he largely credited his experiences at UCCS. Reilly studied Communications & Film Editing during his four years in college, which bolstered his self-determination and career trajectory. He reflected that receiving this award "was basically a really big 'thank you' to them!"



While enrolled at UCCS, Reilly gained valuable hands-on experience through an internship with the university's media department. His work filming campus events and athletic competitions impressed supervisors so much that the internship evolved into ongoing employment.

Today, Reilly continues building his career through multiple roles that capitalize on his Communications studies. Looking back, he says college changed the course of his life: **"College helped me be more independent, responsible, and really organized."** Most importantly, he attributes his college experience with helping him reach his dream of working in communications and film.

Reilly's definition of inclusion is simple and powerful: "Being with other people; not being excluded." His story is an inspiring reminder of what inclusive higher education makes possible. By learning alongside peers, building technical skills, and gaining real-world experience, Reilly was prepared to pursue meaningful opportunities in the film industry and contribute to his community. We are proud of Reilly for what he has accomplished and what it represents for the countless more students with ID gaining access to higher education. His advice for future students is sound: **"Try your best. Never give up."**

[WATCH REILLY'S VIDEO HERE](#)



IMPACT OF IHE



Access Requires Investment: Removing Financial Barriers to IHE

Over the past decade, Colorado has made remarkable progress in expanding inclusive higher education opportunities. In 2015, parents, educators, and passionate community members set out to address the clear gap in access for students with ID in higher education. Today, because of their determination and advocacy, there are now eight thriving programs across the state, opening doors for more students with ID than ever before. This growth reflects a shared commitment across Colorado that every student deserves the opportunity to experience college, build independence, prepare for meaningful employment, and contribute to their community.

While this progress is worth celebrating, access extends beyond simply having a program to attend. For many students and their families, the cost of higher education remains one of the greatest barriers to participation. Tuition, fees, housing, transportation, and other educational expenses can place college out of reach. IN! is committed to creating greater financial access so that cost is not the deciding factor in whether a student can pursue their college goals.

This year marks a major milestone in our effort. Every inclusive higher education pathway in Colorado has now been designated as a **Comprehensive Transition & Postsecondary (CTP) Program** by the U.S. Department of Education. As a result, eligible students enrolled in these programs are able to access federal financial aid, including Pell Grants and Federal Work-Study opportunities. This achievement not only recognizes the quality of IHE in Colorado, but also relieves one of the most common barriers to access. IN! is proud to have supported each program through the CTP designation process and looks forward to the lasting impact this accomplishment will have for students for years to come.

In addition to expanding federal financial aid opportunities, IN! continues to invest directly in students through our **Need-Based Scholarship Program**. We recognize the continued gap in funding sources for students with ID pursuing postsecondary education and have garnered critical support from community members to meet the need. Thanks to the generosity of foundations and individual donors, IN! has collaboratively awarded 71 IHE scholarships since 2022 and aims to continue doing so for years to come. Each scholarship helps reduce financial burdens and improves student success rates.

Providing genuine access to college for students with ID is a paradigm shift with life-changing results and unparalleled community impact. As we pursue our mission, IN! remains committed to addressing and removing inequities so more students with ID can accomplish their dreams and reaffirm what is possible.



INPUT from the ED



I am amazed at how far we have come in a few short years, a feeling that doubles when I consider all that is happening and how bright the future appears to be. Our work would not be possible without the support of donors and grant-making institutions, all of which allow us to continue the work of removing critical barriers to inclusion.

However, what we have learned in the years since our founding is that addressing and removing inequities so that more students with ID can accomplish their dreams takes a tremendous effort. Each year, with the support of our community of incredibly generous donors, stakeholders and concerned citizens, we prove ourselves up to the task.

Fortunately, the record shows that **our commitments continue to garner measurable results** – enrollment and graduation, social engagement, transitions into the workforce, and increasing levels of independence are all improving! In order to continue advancing these priorities, I am hoping that you will become a supporter.

Please join us for our Tailgate Fundraiser on Oct. 21 and, if you are moved by our work, please consider becoming a sponsor. Together we will continue to move the needle toward equal access.

Looking forward to hosting you.

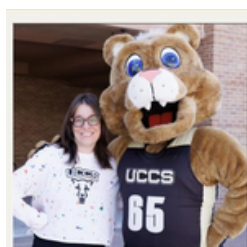
Sincerely,

Gregg Zaire
Executive Director

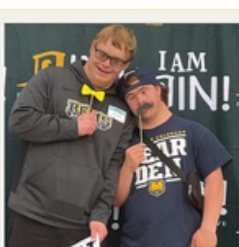
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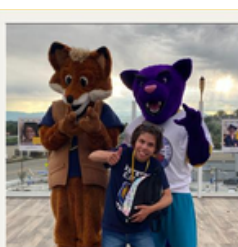
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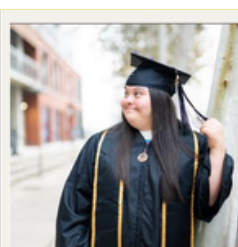
Be INspired



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Be INclusive



**Wednesday,
October 21, 2026
6:00-9:00 p.m.**
Mile High Station
Denver, CO

**TAILGATE
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