



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

One Million Degrees Names Executive Director of Colorado Office

*Melanie D'Evelyn brings extensive college success experience to the Adams County
Finish What You Started program supporting some college, no-degree adults*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHICAGO, March 17, 2022 - [One Million Degrees](#) (OMD), a leading provider of wraparound student supports to ensure community college student success, today named Melanie D'Evelyn, as its Colorado executive director. As part of her responsibilities, Melanie will lead OMD's partnership with the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) to implement the Adams County Finish What You Started program for low-income Colorado adults, aged 25+, to obtain college credentials or degrees. D'Evelyn, a Colorado native, joins OMD from Detroit Drives Degrees, where as director she focused on building a coalition of 50 colleges, business leaders, and funders to support college access, success, and upward pathways for adult students in the workforce.

Adams County Finish What You Started is a joint initiative, launched in Adams County in March 2021, between the Colorado Department of Higher Education's (CDHE) Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) and OMD. COSI and OMD have been working closely with Adams County community-based organizations and local college partners to recruit and enroll students, encouraging them to re-enroll in postsecondary education and graduate. Lead partners include the Rocky Mountain Partnership, Adams County Workforce & Business Center, and Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Adams County Finish What You Started largely serves students of color and first-generation students with some college, combining financial support with additional services such as career planning and student coaching, connection to community and public resources (e.g., transportation assistance, childcare centers, legal aid services, housing support, etc.), and career connections. The Colorado General Assembly in June 2021 approved the statewide expansion of the program to 31 colleges as part of the state's plan to achieve 66% credential attainment. OMD has been supporting these colleges in building a statewide learning community.

"We are thrilled that Melanie will be leading our partnership in Colorado with COSI to increase college access and success for adults with some college, but no degree," said Aneesh Sohoni, CEO of OMD. "She combines deep roots in Colorado, including relationships with local colleges and civic leaders, with a proven track record of building partnerships that addressed the equity gap in education and greatly enhanced economic opportunity."



In Detroit, D'Evelyn brought together stakeholders across the education, private and nonpublic sectors to focus on building the education and employment pipeline of adult low-income students and students of color. Among her initiatives was a multi-institutional debt-forgiveness program that removed barriers - such as past due tuition, library fines or parking tickets – for adult students seeking to re-enroll and which had a disproportionate impact on minority students.

“We are excited to welcome Melanie, whose deep experience in policy and program implementation will be crucial to building relationships in Adams County with the full range of stakeholders – higher education institutions, local officials, companies, and nonprofits – to increase college enrollment and opportunities for economic mobility,” said Dr. Cynthia Armendariz, COSI Senior Director.

OMD’s proven success model also serves the seven City Colleges of Chicago, plus Harper College, Prairie State College, and South Suburban College in the Chicago area, providing coaching, financial support, and professional development advice that equip students with the skills to graduate and to help them successfully transition into the workforce. Research from the University of Chicago [Inclusive Economy Lab](#) finds that OMD support significantly increases three-year community college graduation rates.

“Determining how to drive economic advancement for all Coloradans—especially for students of color and low-income students— while simultaneously meeting the state’s increasing demand for talent, are among the most important policy challenges of the moment,” said D'Evelyn. “I am excited to expand OMD’s partnership with COSI in Adams County and across the state to promote systemic change in education and government policy with the aim of better serving adult students, who are key to achieving the state’s goals for equity and prosperity.”

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About One Million Degrees

One Million Degrees accelerates community college students’ progress on career pathways to economic mobility by providing wrap-around supports to highly motivated community college students to help them succeed in school, in work, and in life. From tutors and coaches to financial assistance and professional development, OMD offers the support that empowers scholars to transform their lives and those around them for generations. OMD currently serves 871 community college scholars from under-resourced neighborhoods at 10 Chicago-area community colleges, including all seven City Colleges of Chicago. OMD partners with employers across industries to build on-ramps to in-demand jobs through new apprenticeship and credentialing programs.

About the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative

The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI) was created to increase the attainment of postsecondary credentials and degrees for underserved students. The project addresses this challenge in two ways: accessibility and affordability. To increase accessibility, COSI funds programs that will help prepare students for postsecondary education, as well as support them through completion. To increase affordability, COSI provides matching funds for community scholarships.