



Colorado

2025 New Member Reception

July 23, 2025

Denver City Park Pavillion

Welcome to the International Women's Forum of Colorado New Member Reception!

The International Women's Forum of Colorado (IWF Colorado) unites women leaders from across our state—women who represent the highest levels of significant accomplishment in their respective fields.

Founded in 1976 as the second forum of the International Women's Forum, IWF Colorado is proud to be part of a global network of more than 8,000 preeminent leaders in 77 forums across 34 countries and six continents.

IWF Colorado is dedicated to advancing women's leadership and championing equality by sharing knowledge, offering support, and uniting women leaders from diverse fields. The forum aims to connect, empower, and provide a platform for women to learn from one another, grow their impact, and drive positive change in their communities and beyond.

Our Values:

- **Leadership:** Inspiring others to act together to accomplish important goals, where the power of many augments the effort of one.
- **Diversity:** Understanding, appreciating, embracing, and championing individuals and their differences to demonstrate that every person matters.
- **Integrity:** Acting with honesty and ethics in alignment with personal and group values.
- **Mentoring and Cultivating:** Guiding and supporting other women so that they too can have lasting impact through their contributions to society and beyond.

We are delighted to welcome our newest members and look forward to growing this extraordinary community together.



Cindy Parsons

Executive Director, ESG & Sustainability | CSG

Cindy is currently the executive director of sustainability and environmental, social & governance for CSG. In this role, she leads the company's ESG strategy, reporting and disclosure process, policy development, and communications. She is also responsible for developing strategic sustainability programs designed to drive innovative approaches to inclusive and sustainable impact programs that benefit the community, preserve the planet and reduce the company's carbon footprint.

Prior to CSG, Cindy spent 17 years serving in multiple leadership roles including vice president of market planning and strategy, vice president of external affairs and community impact for Comcast. She was responsible for identifying opportunities offered by a connected world for cities across the Comcast footprint. She worked with leadership to collaborate with people, companies, not-for-profits, media and government leaders to bring big ideas to life and unleash the innovation economy.

She currently serves on the National Women In Cable & Telecommunications Board, Visit Denver Board (Chair 2013) and Metropolitan State University Foundation Board (Governance Chair) and previously served on the Downtown Denver Partnership, Denver Civic Ventures Board, and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado Board among others in Colorado. She is an active member of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Foundation (Chair 2010) and the Metro Economic Development Corporation. Cindy is alumni of the 2006 DMCLF Leadership Denver program, served on the Downtown Denver Partnership awards jury in 2005, and chaired the jury in 2007/2008 and again in 2016.

Nominator: Angela Baier

Letter of Support: Elaine Torres



Heather Lamm

Chief Revenue Officer | Bolt on Technology

Heather is a hands-on executive with experience in software, media, and education sectors, specializing in revenue growth and team development. She currently serves as the Chief Revenue Officer at Bolt on Technology, a SAAS company providing CRM and marketing software to small businesses. Since 2022, Heather has focused on helping companies grow and profit during leadership changes or corporate restructuring. She has led the re-commercialization of Bolt On's product suite and the restructuring of the revenue team following a merger in 2021. From 2016-2022, Heather was the Chief Marketing, Advocacy & Communications Officer at DSST Public Schools, a charter network in Denver and Aurora. She led efforts in student recruitment, brand marketing, and public advocacy, overseeing the recruitment of over 2,000 students annually, contributing \$22M in funding. Heather was also a Founder and Partner at Brushfire Sales, a professional services firm serving clients like Act!, Time Warner Cable, and HomeAdvisor. Earlier, she was Executive Vice President at MediaNews Group, where she led the development of its interactive strategy. Committed to her Denver community, Heather co-founded Resign DPS Board, a grassroots effort to force reforms after the shooting of a student and administrators at DPS schools. She has served on various boards, including DSST Public Schools and the Denver Museum of Science and Nature President's Leadership Council. She holds an MBA from Kellogg School of Management and a BA from Brown University.

Nominator: Barb Grogan

Letter of Support: Kirsten Benefiel



Jocelyn Hittle

**Associate Vice President, CSU Spur Campus & Special Projects
Colorado State University**

Jocelyn leads Colorado State University's Spur campus in Denver. She oversees programs, partnerships, and operations at CSU Spur, which sees about 100,000 visitors annually, and is inspiring life-long learners to engage in global challenges in food, water, health, and sustainability. She managed design and construction of CSU Spur, incorporating community engagement and sustainability into this unique campus. Previously, Jocelyn worked in sustainable and inclusive urban planning, as the Associate Director of PlaceMatters, and with the Orton Family Foundation.

She is the Membership Chair of the Urban Land Institute's Sustainable Development Council and the Governance Chair for ULI Colorado. She sits on the Denver Metro Economic Development Corporation Executive Committee, the Salazar Center for North American Conservation Executive Advisory Board, the Advisory Board for the Institute for Science & Policy at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, and Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation Board.

She has a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton, an MBA from Colorado State University, and a Master's in Environmental Management from Yale's Environment School. Jocelyn is a previous TEDx speaker and hosts the CSU Spur of the Moment podcast.

Nominator: Linda Childears

Letter of Support: Maureen McDonald



Leslie Mitchell

Retired Bank President | FirstBank of Cherry Creek

Leslie Mitchell retired in June 2010 after 26 years with FirstBank Holding Company. At the time of her retirement, she was the president of FirstBank of Cherry Creek. Leslie currently serves on the Audit Committee for the City of Denver. Past community service includes serving on the boards of AAA Colorado, Emily Griffith Foundation, Denver Public Schools Foundation, Public Education and Business Coalition, State Board of Real Estate Appraisers, State Board of Mortgage Loan Originators, Cherry Creek North Business Improvement District, and Saint Joseph's Hospital Foundation.

Leslie graduated from the University of Colorado – Boulder with a B.S., Business Administration and from the University of Colorado – Denver with a Master of Business Administration, emphasis in Finance. She also received a Graduate Degree in Banking from the University of Wisconsin.

She has been named a Girl Scout Women of Distinction, as well as a twice nominated for Colorado Outstanding Women in Business.

Leslie has two adult sons who also live in Denver. She and her husband, Rob, usually either traveling or planning their next trip.

Nominator: Debbie Welle Powell

Letter of Support: Carolyn McCormick



Lisa Hill

President & CEO | Invest in Kids

In 2009, Invest in Kids' Board of Directors selected Ms. Hill as their Executive Director after she had capably served as the organization's Deputy Director since 2000. Invest in Kids (IIK) is a nonprofit organization that works alongside Colorado communities to adopt, implement, and successfully scale proven programs that have the greatest long-term impact on young children and families experiencing economic inequalities. She manages a robust internal organization of 25 professional staff and a board of directors with 12 members. She has led a culture that values leadership development, efficient systems, strong financial management, staff productivity, and commitment to mission. Ms. Hill's leadership in the non-profit sector is evident in her strong community connections and active engagement with IIK's partners throughout the state. She has been publicly recognized by her award of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellowship, participation in the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Leadership Denver Class of 2013 as well as the El Pomar Foundation's Nonprofit Executive Leadership Program and was named the 2014 9NEWS Leader of the Year. Ms. Hill holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and has two college-aged daughters.

Nominator: Vicki Cowart

Letter of Support: Beth McCann



Lise Barbour

**Vice President, People & Culture and Chief Compliance Officer
Colorado Permanente Medical Group**

Dr. Lise Taylor Barbour has been practicing Palliative Medicine at Kaiser Permanente – Colorado for 18 years. In this time, she has held advancing leadership positions for Colorado Permanente Medical Group (CPMG) including leadership roles over recruiting, leadership development and as the first physician leader accountable for wellness in 2017. From 2021-2024, she served on the CPMG Board of Directors, including as Board Chair 2023-2024. She currently serves as Executive Director, People & Culture for CPMG. In the Denver community, she has served on the Colorado Physician Health Program (CPHP) Board of Directors since 2019 and has been an active member of St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral since 2010, serving on various task forces and search committees. She and her husband Tom, and two teenage daughters Adeline and Cecile have lived in Evergreen, Colorado where they volunteer for several community organizations, including Center for the Arts Evergreen and Resilience 1220. A choral singer for many years, she sings with the Evergreen Chorale. Her most recent project is at the Buchanan Park Community Garden where she and her family are cultivating a garden, despite the wildlife and weather challenges of Evergreen.

Nominator: Diane Barrett

Letter of Support: Carolyn McCormick



Loren R. Furman

President & CEO | Colorado Chamber of Commerce

Loren Furman is the President & CEO of the Colorado Chamber of Commerce - a statewide business organization of 2,000+ member companies representing over 100 industries. She leads a 46-member Board of Directors, 6-member Executive Committee and a \$4 million operating budget.

In the first two years as CEO, she executed a 10-year strategic vision for the organization, raised \$500k in new operating revenue, adopted new policies and best practices, increased long-term financial resources, created new strategic policy initiatives and raised \$1.4 million for a new Foundation to support the Colorado Chamber's vision.

Through her leadership, she has earned the Chamber a reputation as the most powerful business organization in Colorado. She is a trusted advisor and political strategist who has cultivated long-lasting relationships with political leaders and policy makers. Loren is the first woman CEO of the Colorado Chamber of Commerce. She was recognized by the Denver Post as one of Colorado's Most Influential Women and Denver Business Journal as an Outstanding Woman in Business. She was also recognized by the Denver Business Journal as a Top Business Newsmaker for 3 years in a row.

Nominator: Maria Garcia Berry

Letter of Support: Debbie Brown



Lorii Rabinowitz
CEO | Denver Scholarship Foundation

Lorii Rabinowitz has served as CEO of the Denver Scholarship Foundation (DSF) since 2017, driven by her lifelong belief in access to equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Under her leadership and in collaboration with an exceptional team, DSF has more than tripled its annual operating revenue. This growth enables the organization to serve over 16,000 young people from 9th grade through college and into their careers each year. Lorii is especially energized by partnerships with students, alumni, families, Denver Public Schools, college partners, donors, the community, and the board. These partnerships, coupled with the tenacity, fortitude, and hard work of the students and Scholars served yielded Scholar success rates unparalleled across the country, with 80% of DSF Scholars, nearly all of whom are students of color, first in their families to go to college, and have grown up with low income. Lorii's prior experience includes executive roles with an entrepreneurial venture and boutique consulting firm, as well as many years in business development, strategic partnership and innovation in radio and television, including 9NEWS. Lorii is an active volunteer with numerous nonprofits, having served as board chair, and on a variety of boards, in addition to her current role as a Trustee of Rose Community Foundation. She has been honored as 9NEWS Leader of the Year Finalist, one of the Denver Business Journal's "Most Admired CEO's" and others, as well as the #1 Top Trusted Leader in the Small Business Category by the Denver Post Top Workplaces, based on feedback of the DSF staff. Lorii grew up in Albuquerque, NM, attended the University of New Mexico and earned a bachelor's degree in biology. Alongside her professional work and volunteer efforts, Lorii enjoys time with her family: her partner, Paul, bonus kids, Antonia and Zoe, and dog and cats, Winnie, Tapii, and Calii.

Nominator: Lynn Gangone

Letter of Support: Katie MacWilliams



Maggie Dehn

Head of Institutional Sales Optimization, SVP | Fidelity Investments

Maggie Dehn is Head of Sales Optimization, Acceleration, and Retention support for Fidelity Investments' Workplace Investing (WI). Maggie has 20+ years of experience as a market leader in benefits and wellness business with a background in sales, finance, operations, and organizational development. She is based out of Denver, Colorado where she calls home with her husband and two daughters.

Maggie has her Masters in Communications from University of Denver and a Bachelor of Science and Business Administration from the University of Colorado Boulder – Leeds School of Business.

Maggie's leads a multi-functional team in Workplace Investments. The team includes sales excellence, innovation, deal, proposal, pricing, and business contracts. The team is responsible for providing support to sales and retention business across all markets, including defined contribution, defined benefit, health solutions, student debt administration and workplace charitable offerings.

Maggie is passionate about creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. She leads Associate Engagement for WI Sales. She is also a member of Women's Leadership Group (WLG) and Asian, Inclusivity, Multiculturism AIM ERG at Fidelity. Maggie was born in Saigon, Vietnam.

Nominator: Patty Fontneau

Letter of Support: Lynnea Hutton



Marielena DeSanctis

President | Community College of Denver

Dr. Marielena DeSanctis is a nationally recognized leader in education whose career spans engineering, K-12, and higher education. As President of the Community College of Denver (CCD), she has led unprecedented growth, including double-digit enrollment increases, a 26% rise in credentials earned, and a 122% surge in high school dual enrollment. Her efforts have brought in over \$150 million in funding, landmark legislative wins, and transformative partnerships, demonstrating how community colleges drive opportunity and regional prosperity.

Previously, as College Provost and Senior Vice President at Broward College, Dr. DeSanctis spearheaded academic and operational improvements, expanded international initiatives, and implemented innovative teaching practices that improved outcomes for underserved students. Her work contributed to Broward's repeated recognition by the Aspen Institute as a top U.S. community college.

Starting as a mechanical engineer, she transitioned to education, rising from classroom teacher to assistant superintendent for Broward County Schools, where she led major academic advancements and broadened advanced learning.

Dr. DeSanctis holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Math Education, and a bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech. She is an Aspen Presidential Fellow, a White House-honored leader, and a respected expert in national education and workforce policy. Fluent in English and Spanish, she is active in her community and on several national boards.

Nominator: Karen Ashworth

Letter of Support: Carol Carter



Mary Nguyen

President, Founder & Chef | Olive & Finch Collective

Mary Nguyen is a self-taught chef who transitioned from investment banking to become America's only female executive sushi chef. Now a leading force in Denver's culinary scene, she is the founder and president of Olive & Finch Collective—a growing portfolio that includes restaurants (Olive & Finch), cafes (Little Finch), a food and beverage company (Finch, On The Fly), and a hospitality consulting firm.

Under Mary's leadership, Olive & Finch has earned widespread recognition, including finalist for the Denver Business Journal's Small Business Awards, a BBB Torch Award for Ethics, and inclusion in ColoradoBiz's Top 200 Private Companies, Top 100 Companies, and Top 100 Women-Owned Businesses. In 2024, the City of Denver named it a Legacy Business. Olive & Finch continues to thrive, most recently earning multiple honors in 5280 Magazine's Top of the Town and Westword's Best Happy Hour.

Mary was named a 2025 Girl Scouts Woman of Distinction and has been featured in *The Empowerment Project*, *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, and Channel 9's *Colorado & Company*.

She serves on several advisory and nonprofit boards focused on small business, civic engagement, and education—advancing inclusive growth through mentorship, financial access, and leadership development.

Nominator: Jill Wright

Letter of Support: Maria Garcia Berry



Michelle Marks

Chancellor Emerita/Professor of Management | University of Colorado Denver

Michelle Marks is Chancellor Emerita and Professor of Management at the University of Colorado Denver. As a longstanding leader in higher education, she is nationally recognized for her innovation, impact, and education-workforce partnerships. She possesses more than fifteen years of experience in CEO roles and C-level higher education leadership, with a focus on public-private partnerships.

Marks' leadership has been dedicated to fostering student success, strategic growth, digital/AI transformation, and business and government partnerships with higher education. Before her tenure at CU Denver, Marks served as Vice President for Academic Innovation and New Ventures at George Mason University, Virginia's largest public research university. In this role, she spearheaded strategic partnerships aimed at delivering online programming on a scale and created an innovative transfer pathway program, now considered a national model. Marks founded P3.EDU, a national conference on public- private partnerships in higher education, now in its seventh year.

Currently, Marks holds the position of Professor of Management in CU Denver's Business School. Her areas of expertise include organizational leadership and teamwork, and she is a public speaker on leadership topics. She has mentored and coached many professionals in higher education and business, with a focus on women's leadership development. Marks earned her BS in psychology from James Madison University and her MA and PhD in industrial/organizational psychology from George Mason University.

Nominator: Debbie Brown

Letter of Support: Joanne Posner Mayer



Samantha Weeks

Director | Victory Strategies

Dr. Samantha “Combo” Weeks, is a retired Air Force Colonel having served over 23 years on active duty. She is a combat-proven fighter pilot with over 2,200 hours flying the F-15C and F-16, including 105 combat hours.

She had the distinct honor of being the first-ever female solo pilot on the Air Force Thunderbirds jet demonstration team. After retiring, Combo jumped boldly into the fintech industry where she was a successful Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer at Shift4, a \$7B public company.

Today, Dr. Weeks continues to support the military through her volunteer work as a committee member on the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), a Squadron Professional Ethics Advisor at the US Air Force Academy, and as an Advisory Board Member to ROGER Bank, a newly designed digital bank which helps military members with their financial future.

Dr. Weeks lives to inspire and empower the next generation with integrity, selfless service, excellence, and a bold indomitable spirit. The same attributes that helped her succeed and achieve anything she set her eyes on.

Her purpose in life is to her two young sons and surviving the trials and tribulations of energetic young children.

Nominator: Barbara Faulkenberry

Letter of Support: Susan Helms



Simone Ross

CEO | Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce

Simone D. Ross serves as CEO and Executive Director of the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce, where she has substantially increased sponsorship and membership revenue. As the founder of Simone D. Ross, LLC, she specializes in change management and strategic business consulting. Her impressive corporate career includes leadership positions at Kaiser Permanente, where she drove significant membership growth; Delta Dental, where she founded a subsidiary corporation with multi-million dollar EBITDA pro forma; SCL Health, directing large-scale transactions; and The Riveter, managing capital expansion across markets.

A Colorado native with MBA and MA degrees from Colorado State University, Simone's excellence has earned her multiple recognitions, including Denver Business Journal's Leader in Diversity Award (2024), Girl Scouts Women of Distinction (2024), "Outstanding Women in Business," "40 Under 40," and placement among the Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Business.

Her community involvement includes board service with The Denver Foundation, The Colorado Music Hall of Fame, Colorado Enterprise Fund, Economic Development Association for Black Communities, and Girls Inc. Denver. Simone founded Youth United University, a leadership program for middle school students, and created the Women's Leadership Lab, where many participants reported career advancement.

An accomplished TEDx speaker, she advocates for inclusive systems and equitable business practices while raising her children, Gavin and Zoe.

Nominator: Carol Carter

Letter of Support: Marti Awad



Theresa Spahn

Judge | Denver County Court

Judge Theresa Spahn was appointed to the Denver County Court bench in 2014 by Mayor Michael Hancock and later became Presiding Judge, where she led critical procedural reforms and guided the court through the COVID-19 pandemic. She currently serves in Criminal Courtroom 3A.

Previously, Judge Spahn was managing partner at Wedgle & Spahn, P.C., specializing in family law, civil litigation, and dispute resolution. She also directed the O'Connor Judicial Selection Initiative, collaborating with Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Rebecca Love Kourlis to promote fair and impartial courts, including work on judicial retention systems.

As the founding Executive Director of Colorado's Office of the Child's Representative (OCR), Judge Spahn established a nationally recognized agency representing over 19,000 children annually and managing 250 attorneys statewide. Her leadership raised advocacy standards for vulnerable youth.

Earlier in her career, she served as a District Court Magistrate and as a Deputy District Attorney in Adams and Mesa Counties, specializing in crimes against children and launching the Sexual Assault against Children Task Force.

Judge Spahn is the past president of both the Colorado Women's Bar Association and the Adams/Broomfield Bar Association and is active in various professional and philanthropic organizations. She holds a J.D. from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and a bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University. A third-generation Denver native, Judge Spahn enjoys family time, community volunteering, cooking, and exploring Colorado's outdoors.

Nominator: Beth McCann

Letter of Support: Kristin Bronson



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM *Colorado*

To all the remarkable members of IWF Colorado,

Thank you for being the foundation and inspiration of our Forum. Every one of you brings invaluable experience, insight, and generosity to our community. Your passion for lifting others, enthusiasm for lifelong learning, and commitment to leadership are what make IWF Colorado truly extraordinary.

Whether you are welcoming new faces, sharing your expertise, or championing the achievements of women in Colorado and beyond, your involvement shapes our mission and future. We are deeply grateful for your engagement, support, and friendship.

Together, we continue to elevate one another and create lasting impact.

Thank you for being such an essential part of IWF Colorado.

With appreciation,

IWF Colorado 2025 Board of Directors

President: Helen Clark Atkeson

Vice President: Patty Fontneau

Treasurer: Dessa Bokides

Secretary: Elaine Torres

Board Advisor: Marla Williams

Membership Chair: Cathy Lucas

Program Co Chairs: Kristin Bronson & Kristin Waters

Dine Around Chair: Angela Baier

IWF International Liaison: Barbara Grogan

Immediate Past President & IWF World Leadership Conference Co Chair:

Jeanne Saunders

IWF Fellows Program & IWF World Leadership Conference Co Chair:

Barbara Faulkenberry

Thank you for celebrating the newest members of IWF Colorado!

For more information, visit <https://iwfcolorado.org> or contact admin@iwfcolorado.org.