A suitcase, a box of films and a dream.

That's all Ikechukwu Onyeka had with him when he traveled thousands of miles from his native Nigeria and first joined the Colorado Film School sight-unseen in 2012.

OK, he also had a vision for himself and his future. He was proud of the nearly 30 films he toted with him to the United States. But it's fair to say he felt a void that needed to be filled.

"It gets to the point in your career where you think you need to move into the next phase," Onyeka, better known as I.K., said of his original enrollment after consulting with Frederic Lahey, the film school's director. "I think I got into that point back home and decided I really needed to move forward from where I'd been.

"We got something going, and here we are today."

What Onyeka eventually got going not only profoundly affected his skillset. He helped coordinate an influx of his fellow Nigerian filmmakers into Colorado. So, by the time he returned this March, 22 of his colleagues were in tow. Better still, his government had established an economic development grant entitled Project Act in order to finance the trip.

The overriding goal, both for many of the participating individuals and the country itself, was to lift the artistic
level of the world’s third-largest content producer to new heights.

Nigerian films are well-distributed – at times producing 1,000 titles a month, trailing only the U.S. and India – and are widely purchased around the globe. But these works are mainly CD and DVD quality and fall at a technological and cinematic level on par with corporate video and television production.

The vision of the Nigerian contingent, which packed 44 one-hour learning packets into 20 days through April 18, was to return home not only having improved their craft – but to start a startling transformation of their film industry.

That’s no small task. But it’s one that the Nigerian group now feels better prepared to attain, given the extraordinary leaps they’ve made in their personal skillsets in a short time coupled with the fact that they intend on spreading the word to other African filmmakers upon their return.

“It’s going to be a revolution,” vowed Andy Amenechi, president of the Directors Guild of Nigeria and one of the on-site contingent at CCA. “I foresee a different style, a professional input into filmmaking, from this program.”

There is no doubting the enthusiasm of the group as they take on reams of content within a short time frame. “At the same time they’re a little overwhelmed,” chimed in Tony Pfau, an adjunct instructor who teaches 16-millimeter HD, production management, and other courses at the college. “They’re thousands and thousands of miles away, experiencing a new culture, experiencing a new way of thinking and doing things, trying to adjust. But I love these guys. I asked them if they could be in my classes every semester. It’s more like we’re trading our craft. I’m bringing something to the party, and they’re showing me a thing or two.”

Paul Apel never had even heard of Colorado before Onyeka mentioned the state following his initial film-school experience. In Abuja, his nation’s capital, Apel had a pretty good thing going in the industry. He’d acted in some TV programs and a few movies. He was an adept editor and owned his own facilities for that purpose. He also had written and directed four films, while having financed six other scripts and a short film.

Demand for his services was high. But after talking to Onyeka, Apel realized there also was a gap in his knowledge base. “I wrote certain things that are good, but I didn’t know why I wrote them. Now, I know why I’m writing these things and even know more to add to my stories and how to give them a face. It’s been cool coming here. It’s something I can’t explain. If I hadn’t come here, I would have been really in the dark.

“I’m naturally gifted,” Apel added. “But this is taking it to the right competence.”

Apel was intrigued the first time Onyeka mentioned Colorado Film School. The goal to lift the level of the entire industry only served to raise his excitement level. Onyeka, though, knew he couldn’t take on that Hercu-
Film School

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lean task without help. Apel quickly signed on with the others for the trip.

"From the very first day of script class, I gave (I.K.) a hug and told him he brought me to the right place," Apel explained. "It was like I was reborn."

As Amenechi put it, Nigerians are famous for being "storytellers for generations ... imparting knowledge of their people through tales by moonlight to children."

The skills they've acquired at CCA will help infuse those stories with technical and storytelling know-how heretofore unknown.

"It's a great opportunity and a great privilege to be able to affect the filmmakers of West Africa. And what I.K. has told me is that Ghana is next, and he said all of West Africa is going to be coming here for training," Lahey said with a laugh.

The film school had to navigate just how it was going to condense two years of study into a four-week period for the Nigerian group. It helped that these filmmakers weren't beginners. It also was made easier by a faculty and staff willing to construct a best-case scenario academically for the group.

Training was built to include such facets as script writing, story structure, character development, writing dialogue, directing actors, eliciting reality behavior in performances, moving the camera, and lighting.

"Filmmaking is about doing the right thing," Amenechi said. "There is no Nigerian, American or Taiwanese filmmaker. There are international filmmakers, and there are certain specifications you need to make films. And if you want to compete in the international marketplace, you must have those standards. There's no left, right or center about it. So we have decided to be on the path of international best practices so that we can compete in the marketplace."

For Lahey, the Nigerian visit fits the film school's original vision of providing democratic access to the means of expression.

"One of my main slogans is, 'Why hold onto good if you can be better,'" Onyeka said. "I attach that to everything I do. I always want to see how to get better. Besides that, at the end of the day, you're trying to fall into the global market or the mainstream of filmmaking, and you need to be in tune with what is happening and what's going to happen. You don't do that by being reclusive, but by reaching out."

Onyeka cited the model set by "Bollywood," the Indian filmmaking industry. His own study showed that while that country has invited the technology of Hollywood, it has made little impact regarding "the disposition or idea of filmmaking" in terms of its scripts.

"We have stories that are true to life and one can relate with, not science fiction," he said. "So, for me, it's about being able to tell our story in the quality that every person will be able to identify with – quality production, paying attention to details, and every product that makes Hollywood movies stand out. That's what we're trying to do – and it's paying off."

I.K. initially chose the Colorado Film School because of its seamless combination of academics and hands-on training. It didn't hurt that the film school was voted one of the top-25 such institutions in the world.

"Our goal is to be an enabling institution," Lahey said. "The ideas, the creativity, still have to come from the individuals themselves. But what we can do is give them a structure, a method and a forum with which to pursue these ideas and hopefully a perspective from which to see their own work."

Apel's vision already is clear. He sees an increased Nigerian film presence on a global scale by next year. And while the types of budgets that produce Hollywood summer blockbusters aren't likely to be available in Nigeria, the sense is they don't have to be.

"I know for sure that we don't have what it takes to do some of those films," Apel said. "But we can tell stories that tour the heart."

That tour then could potentially be followed by a detour to a red carpet or two. That's the hope of many of the the students who gathered at CCA.

"People need to watch out," Onyeka said boldly. "Nigerian film is coming to the Oscars – soon. Trust me on that. ... I'm positive."

One of their instructors wasn't about to throw cold water on such aspirations. "In this industry it's only as realistic as what you're going to put into it," Pfau said. "Look at Robert Rodriguez. He did his $8,000 El Mariachi – Oscar winner – and now he's on to doing bigger pictures. I don't discount anybody from any place from being able to tell stories and get them to the screen."
The Syrian Crisis never saw this potential cessation scenario: a joint resolution aimed at a peacekeeping operation led by a group of countries that normally play nice about as well as unsupervised children in a room full of toys.

India, Iran, Russia, Syria, the United States and China all were working in lockstep, or as one observer called it, setting things up for “a historical event of cooperation.”

But, alas, all of it was too good to be true.

Thank France, or more specifically Adam DuFour, playing that country’s delegate in April’s Model United Nations at the Community College of Aurora, for the whole notion of goodwill disintegrating in a single instant.

DuFour, representing one of the Permanent Five in the Security Council that hold veto power, exercised that very right on the resolution embraced by so many other, seemingly disparate nations.

The power move left Syria’s ruling government in attack mode and the rebels seeking to unseat the powers-that-be facing even more bloodshed.

Luckily, this was only hypothetical.

But for the students playing members of the Security Council, the balance of power in the Middle East was at stake.

There was disbelief, and more than a little ribbing aimed at France for letting its own feelings unhinge what could have been major progress following hours of discussion and debate.

France’s representative blurted out to the room his heartfelt sorrow by telling the assembled countries flummoxed by his actions, the veto made him “feel powerful.” He had other reasons, of course, for taking such a bold, in-your-face step.

“I proposed my resolution and I feel, at first, they essentially shoved me aside, but not as publicly as I did later,” said DuFour, one of more than 100 students separated into three U.N. bodies for the weeklong event organized by Political Science faculty Dr. Bobby Pace.

“Later, they once again ignored France from their resolution and it took me having to go up to them to be a part of it,” DuFour added. “It just felt logical to attack back at them and prove that my resolution would have helped them, and if they had accepted my resolution, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Or, to put it another way, personal feelings ultimately trumped a chance at regional harmony in the Middle East.

“Yes, partially, it was spite,” DuFour said with a laugh.
The frustration in the room mirrored what actually happens in the politicking in backrooms in the real United Nations. Best intentions often are trumped by petty politics. Talk very often doesn’t lead to action.

The bottom line on campus at CCA was that students such as DuFour and Nicholas Banks, who played a Syrian diplomat in the Security Council talks April 4, the United Nations exercise allowed students to experience these types of realities while “becoming” the countries they represented.

At the same time, students felt a need for the difficulties of geopolitical issues, especially when numerous self-interests and outward biases intersect. “This is the United Nations,” Banks said with a grin. “But this was really eye-opening to see things from different perspectives and to see a world in which the U.S. is the enemy. The people who we think are the good guys and the standard often are seen here as this great evil force.”

At one point, the Iranian representative stood up, and dressed in full native garb, insisted “you guys stop giving terrorists money and weapons.” The U.S. chimed in, asking for clarification as to the ‘you guys’ to which Iran was referring.

A finger pointed straight toward the American representative. “You guys,” he reiterated, bringing laughs to the assembled delegates.

Rwanda was equally diplomatic when it bellowed to fellow delegates, “Just because I torture people, we still have to work together…”

That’s not to say that the Security Council, Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) and General Assembly -- split into three rooms on the CentreTech campus for eight hours of activities Friday after two expert lectures in previous days, were unable to create some harmony and legislative gains.

Sure, China’s call for a worldwide one-child policy in the Women, Children and Education discussion fell flat, as did Sudan’s push to allow governments to oversee their people “in a manner they see fit.”

But other resolutions did gain a foothold, including Security Council reform, which allowed new members Germany, South Africa, India and Japan to join the Permanent Five (P5) but limited their veto powers only to items within their own regions and still forced to stomach a three-fifths majority from the P5. Bulgaria received increased assistance on disease prevention to combat health issues by using funds already in hand and adding the educational expertise of nations around the globe in ECOSOC.

The General Assembly’s push to expand indigenous rights and access to educational and health care opportunities was another useful policy that passed.

“This year it’s really the notion of human, and the idea of how we’re all connected to international issues and international engagement…” said Pace, who walked around Model U.N. with a sticker identifying him as “Secretary General ‘Bobby’ Bobby Pace.” “So rather than focusing on some of the what we’d consider the big themes or what many call the ‘por-
Model UN

The first community college since 1975 in Colorado sent "delegations."

Rangeview, and Martin Luther King high schools concurrent enrollment students from Overland, students mainly comprised the event participants.

Dr. Ishay said. “It’s fantastic to come to grips with the one to tackle, address, abide by and subscribe by."

That’s huge. Also, we forget we’re all experts … even to each other, and sharing ideas. And I think that’s huge. Also, we forget we’re all experts … even to each other, and sharing ideas. And I think that’s huge.

The U.N. is one thing, but this is how work is done. It’s done collectively,” said Johnson, associate dean of the undergraduate program at the Joseph Korbel School of International Studies at DU. “It’s done by working with others with different backgrounds. It’s done by sitting at a table with others and sharing ideas and disagreeing. But by disagreeing, it’s also learning from each other. And through that disagreement it’s coming up with solutions.

So you can call it the U.N., which is constructed on a huge scale, but like so many organizations, companies and grass-roots movements that we work with, they come about through something like this (arrangement for Model U.N.) – sitting down, talking to each other, and sharing ideas. And I think that’s huge. Also, we forget we’re all experts … every person in the room is an expert on something, and when you have a forum like this, everyone gets a chance to be that expert and learn from each other. That’s amazing.”

Treatment of prisoners was another primary topic at this year’s CCA Model U.N., part of the overall emphasis on “human” and human-rights issues.

“It’s extraordinary that you’re doing this here in Aurora, Colorado,” Dr. Ishay said. “It’s fantastic to bring the world onto campus to discuss issues. No issue can be understood without a debate. And there’s always a grey area. Model U.N. is a perfect framework to articulate different positions and come to grips with the one to tackle, address, abide by and subscribe by.”

CCA Political Science and Anthropology students mainly comprised the event participants. Concurrent enrollment students from Overland, Rangeview, and Martin Luther King high schools sent “delegations.”

This year’s event comes 12 months after CCA was the first community college since 1975 in Colorado.
Expert dishes on 2015 fly-by of Pluto

Anyone who has ever seen a TV news report where a person who wants to remain anonymous has his or her face pixelated to be unrecognizable has seen what is now the best image ever taken of Pluto.

That will change next year, when the New Horizons fly-by of what Dr. Kimberly Ennico Smith called “an oddball ... at home in the outer solar system” finally is unmasked.

Thanks to this mission, on July 14, 2015, or 9 1/2 years after launch, the resolution of images will improve from the current 12 pixels taken by Hubble Telescope to an incredible 70 meters per pixel.

That means the clarity will go from that “pixelated face” quality to being able to discern objects the size of football fields on the dwarf planet's surface.

“We're living in a time in which the whole understanding of how we want to describe our solar system is changing,” said Ennico Smith, a deputy project scientist on the New Horizons mission and featured speaker April 11 at the bi-annual Sherlin Lecture at CCA. “And what's even cooler? We're sending a spacecraft to it.”

Pluto's size is too small to be discernable by ground-based telescopes and appears as merely a point of light. Such limitations have created “armchair science” about the characteristics of this intriguing solar-system object.

According to Smith, what’s known about Pluto is this: its size is roughly accepted to be about one-sixth of the mass of our moon; has five orbiting ‘satellites’ – Charon, Nix, Hydra, Kerberos, and Styx; possesses bright and dark surface bits; is a red object while Charon is colorless; has an atmosphere; owns a surface made up of nitrogen, methane and carbon monoxide; is lit to 250 times the brightness of a full moon but just one-thousandth of the sun’s impact on Earth.

It takes about four hours to send a signal to the spacecraft and another four to come back. At the time of encounter, the total time will jump to about nine hours.

“No instant gratification on this mission. None at all,” she joked.

The New Horizons science instruments on board are based upon achieving objectives. The main litmus tests that will, at minimum, determine this mission’s success include: characterizing the global geology and morphology of Pluto and Charon; mapping the planet surfaces of Pluto and Charon; and characterizing the atmosphere of Pluto.

Another 27 elements are added objectives and will look at time variability, obtaining stereo images to gauge elevation, seeking other species, trying to identify atmosphere around Charon, and taking images height and amount of atmosphere surrounding Pluto.

Scientific research to date has proven that the dwarf planet’s system is tilted on its side to resemble a bull's eye.

New Horizons’ approach will be “a straight shot” through that bull’s eye, Smith said.

The craft's closest encounter will be 8,078 miles from Pluto, with Charon positioned on the further side. Earth at the time of closest flyby will be around 32 Astronomical Units (AU), or about 2,975 million miles away. It will represent not only the first time humans have explored Pluto, but also has flown by a binary planet or investigated a Kuiper Belt object.

The mission is following the footsteps of the first exploratory crafts, such as Luna I, which came within 5,995 km of the moon in January 1959, and Luna 3, which gave us our first photographic images that next October. Mariner 2 (Venus, 1962), Mariner 4 (Mars, 1965), Pioneer 10 (Jupiter, 1972) Mariner 10 (Mercury, 1974), Pioneer 11 (Saturn, 1979); Voyager 2 (Uranus 1986 and Neptune 1989) followed.

“To get the probe there in an amount of time that’s reasonable it has to go very fast, but it also means it will go by Pluto very fast, so it’s got one shot to perform flawlessly and we won’t know for months whether that was pulled off,” said CCA Astronomy and Physics faculty Victor Andersen. “That type of technology and scientific challenge is something that's unprecedented.

“It’s scary as heck, but you have to push the frontiers and that means allowing for a chance at failure. It’s similar to Opportunity on Mars (which continued to move, gather scientific observations, and report back to Earth for over 40 times its designed lifespan). That was a completely new way of doing things, and they pulled it off. They had one shot to get it right, and did it.”

New Horizons passed the moon’s orbit in just nine hours, traveling at a speed of 31,000 mph. It already has whirred past orbits of Mars (2006), Jupiter (2007), Saturn (2008), Uranus (2011) and will pass Neptune this Aug. 24.

Powered by a radioisotope thermoelectric generator the spacecraft won't run out of fuel until 2032.

Smith’s primary duties the last 21/2 years are to ensure instruments are ready for the encounter.

The suite of instruments onboard includes: an ultraviolet spectrometer to look at atmosphere and study surface reflection; a visible color imager and an infrared spectrometer designed to take four-band imaging and identify gasses such as ammonia, methane and nitrogen; a telescope with a high-resolution camera; an antenna to look down and gauge radio waves at Pluto’s surface; a spectrometer to study heavy, ionized particle measurements; a device to detect ions and electrons from solar wind; and a dust counter.

The Applied Physics Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University is operating New Horizons.
ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

CCA students can receive valuable real-world experience in the workplace through the college’s internship program this summer and fall. It starts with a phone call.

CCA students and Aurora Sister Cities International interns Alayna Moisse and Fatema Amin flank supervisor Tahverlee Dunlop.

Internships are by definition starting on the ground floor.

But for three CCA students, their forays into the workplace have taken them to the ground floor of the ground floor.

This trio is gaining valuable experience working at the nearby Municipal Building, a stone’s throw from CentreTech. Yet they’re doing so while helping the City of Aurora establish its new Sister Cities International program. The group provides historic research while aiding in the development of a marketing media strategy, and developing future plans in concert with the organization’s executive director, Tahverlee Dunlop.

“I actually have a fourth intern as well (from outside CCA), and they’ve all been absolutely wonderful,” said Dunlop, who was hired to oversee the program from scratch last December. “They bring a diverse sense of creativity. That’s what I love. Their experience, knowledge and passion are all different and I like the team approach that allows them to lean on each other, when needed.”

Alayna Moisse, KuanWen Yu and Fatema Amin all took the first step towards their current positions by attending an information session with Internship Coordinator Barbara Young at CCA in what for the college, also was a new endeavor beginning last December.

CCA makes contacts with companies, and, while no internships are guaranteed, students demonstrating that they are passionate about becoming employment ready through an internship are prepped to acquire workplace opportunities. Students must apply for these internships like jobs but often can find one in their field of study.

Once that proper fit is found and an internship is landed, those jobs of 15 or more hours per week run concurrently with a mandatory Business 181 course that meets five times and touches on such subjects as workforce skills and resume building.

For the three Sister Cities interns, the class and workplace coupling has been symbiotic, with situations in their current job settings intertwining with the course curriculum.

“They totally play off each other and connect the dots a lot better than if you would have done one without the other,” said Moisse, an ASCENT student from Hinkley High School who is set to graduate with a high school diploma and associate degree at summer’s end.
Internships

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One reason that the classroom and workplace experience segue so well comes directly from Young’s background.

As she was preparing to leave high school for college, a career advisor told her that the only guaranteed way to be employed upon completion of her education was an internship. It became a driving force. Young was interested in the field of sports and entertainment, and after the general manager of the Pepsi Center spoke at one of her classes as a freshman she kept in constant contact. A year later, an opportunity came up to work at the Democratic National Convention in Denver and that gave Young the internship.

That led to a second opportunity with Kroenke Sports and Entertainment as a meetings and events coordinator, and Young’s knowledge base grew exponentially. “I got a huge big-picture education on what it takes to make a building run.”

It only reinforced the advice she had gotten years earlier about the value of internships.

“It’s the ultimate interview opportunity as an intern,” she said. “You can show a company that you can be a potential asset and they might just make something happen, which is kind of what happened to me. Because when they brought me on as coordinator the position was not available.”

Young was able to not only mingle with executives at Pepsi Center and Kroenke Sports but decision-makers from other local facilities, including the Colorado Convention Center and the Western Stock Show complex. That networking helped her build more opportunities to find employment once she graduated.

The interns she now guides are learning many of the same lessons now.

“I would recommend internships to any student,” said Amin, who has handled research and development for every international sister city that has reached out to Aurora as a potential partner. “It’s a big benefit to learn from real life because when you’re a student, you’ll learn the text, and the teacher will tell you to do the homework, and we’ll read and take the test. But in real life it’s very different. It’s a big chance to meet important people. Can I say VIPs?

Fatema Amin poses outside the Lowry West Quad entryway between classes in early April. Amin hopes to use her experiences to one day run her own business.

“I was shocked to meet all these people,” Amin added. “Never in my life did I think I’d meet the mayor, but Tahverlee has given us the chance and allowed us to introduce ourselves and helped teach us how to be professional when we talk and deal with people. We get to go to many events and learn many things so far.”

Dunlop was more than willing to provide the guidance. A veteran of the non-profit sector, she’s enjoyed working with students “who can bring an international knowledge or cultural experience into the work that we’re doing.” Meeting the intern’s objectives and reaching innovation goals “is just a really strong, strong win-win.”

One of the differences Dunlop has experienced with her current set of interns is that a couple of them lacked prior experience in a workplace environment. That meant considering those backgrounds and focusing initial training on business basics.

There were side benefits, too, with this particular group. Bringing in the likes of Yu, who hails from Taiwan, and Amin, from Bahrain, fits the Sister Cities profile by bringing in cultural diversity that’s reflected in the program itself.

“So far, Aurora has done significant research on cities from around the globe that could be potential economic and trade or humanitarian and cultural partners for the city.

Among the countries discussed to date include China, Japan, India, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Korea, and possibly Brazil or Chile.

“Because we’re a brand new organization, the current projects our interns are working on are very different than maybe an average internship would look like,” Dunlop said. “They’re working on significant pieces to putting the structure in place to develop a successful non-profit.”

In the case of this particular group of interns, that’s meant longer hours than expected and an intensity perhaps missing from other similar jobs.

But Moise said she’s embraced the challenges as well as the opportunities.

“I’ve changed immensely,” she explained. “My attitude, my knowledge, my personality, in a way. It’s made me more mature and more responsible. I’ve gotten to peek into the business world and I know how to hold myself. I know business etiquette. It’s taught me so much that will just help me in real life, just in simple things like sending a professional email.”

Similar experiences are potentially available to other CCA students, with internships available this summer and fall in a variety of fields with the college willing to serve as intermediary. It can be a way to connect education to a future job. (Another way can be by meeting employers face-to-face at the April 24 Career Expo at Lowry.)

CCAs top priority is to have students employment-ready when they finish with the internship opportunities they earn. Young’s primary tasks are preparation and motivation toward that end.

“Internships give you a chance to test out what you want to do and what you want to invest your time in without being fully committed,” Moise maintained. “When you go straight into a degree in a certain area of study, you don’t necessarily get to test it out. You learn all about it. But testing it out is the final determining factor for me. And an internship helps so much because you’re not held to contracts and such like you would be in a job. An internship you make mistakes, but Tahverlee can’t necessarily get mad at me because I might not have known better.

“At a job, you’re not supposed to make mistakes. You can at the beginning. But once you’re in that job you’re expected to know.”

What CCA students need to know about the process of obtaining an internship with the college’s help:

- Interested students must enroll in BUS181 Internship Course. The benefit to taking the class is that it not only will help provide a foundation for a potential workplace trial but also simultaneously accumulate college credit.

- The course runs one academic term and includes five classes and online assignments. Students are determined by assignment evaluations and a final project.

- All internship sites must be approved by the internship coordinator. Possible internship opportunities currently are available to all students regardless of emphasis of studies.

- Internships are not assigned once students enroll. Students must apply for internships, much like applying for a job.

- Internships often can be found in a student’s particular field of study with companies that may not immediately come to mind. Not all internships are paid.

- Students will need a resume but can receive help creating one through an appointment with Career Services.

- Please call CCA Internship Coordinator Barbara Young for more information at 303-340-7328 or via email at barbara.young@ccaurora.edu.

- If students are interested in the summer term, they must act quickly. Internship sites must be confirmed by June 9.
Stories of triumph fill annual event

Denver Sheriff, and 1996 CCA graduate, Gary Wilson has a sculpture in his home depicting a father holding the head of his daughter. An inscription from Roman philosopher Marcus Cicero accompanies the piece, reading, “Where there’s life, there’s hope.”

“I often view that piece of art that sits on the mantle and reflect,” Wilson said April 11 during the Ninth Annual CCA Foundation Scholarship Recognition Luncheon. “And I’m reminded that we are the living hope – the hope for change, and hope for a better future.”

A sense of hope permeated the ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center on that afternoon. It began with the march of scholarship recipients representing 75 different countries, and permeated the stories of the students who came on stage to discuss significant obstacles faced, hurdles overcome, and, yes, their hopes moving forward in their academic and personal lives.

Donors and community leaders heard first-hand how their financial goodwill has directly affected individuals that are part of a diverse college fabric.

“These financial awards, whether for need or merit, highlight the essence of our mission, and that is scholarship, learning and higher education,” said Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, CCA president.

Nearly $600,000 in scholarship funding was provided through the CCA Foundation in 2013-14.

Among the attendees were five Student Success Award scholarship winners: Idaly De Reza, Ashenafi Fantahun Gelaw, Reem Hamodi, and Chandra Dhungel. Other recipients Brenda Anderson, Emily Serff, James Fountain, Laura Bueker, and Maria Garibay Campos stepped on stage to share their emotional stories, as did a troupe of performers – Hunter Bulch, James Brunt, Jasmine Heard, Omar Coronado, Alex Ertel, and Nick Martinez – led by CCA Theatre Director Stacey D’Angelo.

“These students, and thousands more, come to CCA each year with dreams and ambitions, and as executive director of the CCA Foundation, it is my great privilege to help make these dreams come true with the support of folks like you,” said Gene Sobczak, who took over his new role in January.

Representatives from presenting sponsor Wagner Equipment Co., The Medical Center of Aurora Centennial Medical Plaza, Aurora Chamber of Commerce, and numerous other business, education, and government leaders all were on hand to lend their continued support.

“The Community College of Aurora Foundation holds a unique position in being both benefactors for, and beneficiaries of, the community we serve,” Sobczak added. “It’s a role that intrinsically establishes us as a hub within a network of community agencies, businesses and funders – a network that we are committed to developing in the months and years to come.”

Among the pending moves is likely to be a new partnership with the Aurora Sentinel that will provide new media opportunities to businesses and local agencies helping fund scholarships for area students.

That agreement comes on the heels of unique partnerships in recent months between law firm Baker Hostetler, the Foundation, and Aurora Public Schools toward the creation of a $25,000 grant intended for high-performing students who are first in their families to attend college and go through APS and CCA on their way to Metropolitan State University.

The Chamber as part of its tireless work across several segments of CCAs 350-mile square service area announced two new $2,500 scholarships for high schools that are college bound to CCA. Business and community partners are expected to contribute to this scholarship fund.

“Never doubt that you are improving the future for our students, their families, their communities and Colorado,” Oudenhoven said.

At the Foundation luncheon, a $2,500 scholarship in recognition of the role former CCAF Executive Director Diana Whye played in overseeing the expansion of the college’s scholarship program was announced. Also, Ruth Fountain, one of the key community activists that helped establish CCA, was presented with the first annual CCA Foundation Community Service Award.

“She is utterly fearless when it comes to asking for support for causes that are near and dear – particularly with regard to the provision of accessible and affordable higher education right here in Aurora,” college founding father Jim Lewien wrote about Fountain in the event program.
Translation and Interpretation hailed

CCA’s Translation and Interpretation certificate program has been cited for excellence by the Colorado Community College System not only for its work within the classroom, but also for its students’ successful transition into the marketplace.

Marketing efforts, word-of-mouth, and a revised scheduling blueprint has helped grow the program over the last year.

The program first began in Fall 2009.

Translation and Interpretation has since expanded to include courses over two semesters, to give students more time to learn the content and better intersect with regular class scheduling and financial aid windows.

The career and technical education program is skills development based and covers 16 credits. It teaches students simultaneous, consecutive, sight, and written translation.

“This summer semester we’re offering both blocks of classes at the same time so students who started the certificate in the spring can complete it in the summer semester,” said Ana Martin-Mejia, one of the program's co-founders. “But we’re also starting a new cohort in the summer and if they take three classes as part of the full block, they can complete the certificate by the end of the year.”

Graduates have found work in such fields as education, the courts, medicine, and via local conference work, among other areas.

Ana Martin-Mejia displays the plaque bestowed upon Translation and Interpretation by CCCS.

CCCS planning process finds its way to CCA

Dr. Nancy McCallin, president of the Colorado Community College System, and Dr. Linda Bowman, system vice president for executive leadership training and development, visited Community College of Aurora on April 10 as part of a fact-finding mission tied to the system's new strategic plan.

The pair are traveling to all 13 member CCCS colleges and meeting with other external and internal groups as part of an environmental scan that will result in a new principal guiding document to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

McCallin and Bowman’s aim during the visits is to gauge concerns and gather localized information.

“The overarching CCCS vision as currently stated is "providing quality educational opportunities for all to aspire to enrich their lives.” Five goals stressing accessibility, operational excellence and student success support that aspirational statement.

The new strategic plan figures to arrive with a different backdrop than previous processes, stressing increased focus on retention and accountability.

Further, “There are a number of alternatives to traditional higher education that businesses and students are embracing,” McCallin said. “And we need to be even more flexible in changing times.”

A recent white paper by Dr. McCallin investigated other factors that comprise the current environment.

Trends identified include: a growing backlash against tuition increases; constraints on overall tuition and enrollment growth due to economic and demographic pressures; increased reliance on Pell grants; higher accountability to outcomes in Colorado; and heightened competition created by the proliferation of online alternatives to traditional higher education.

There are 1,200 community colleges in the nation and the bar is being raised on numerous levels.

President Barack Obama has set a goal for the U.S. to once again boast the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. The Lumina Foundation wants the number of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to jump to 60 percent from its current 38.7 percent rate by 2025.
Clockwise from top: Dr. Regina Lewis makes a point during the Women’s History Luncheon; *Su Teatro* tells the tale of Cesar Chavez through scenes and song as part of National Hispanic Heritage Month; Mayan elder Miguel Chiquin Wat holds court at the Rotunda; Stacy Brown, Diana Counterman, Nicole Hockert, Kelly Gaer, and Amy Mondhink celebrate St. Patrick’s Day; students check out a multitude of four-year colleges at the spring transfer fair hosted by Outreach and Recruitment.