



admissions

Regional Premiere

by Joshua Harmon

**DIRECTED BY
CHIP WALTON**

March 12 – April 19

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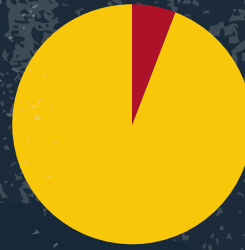
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ADMISSIONS BY THE NUMBERS



2/3 of first time freshman accepted on average



Yale accepts 6% of applicants



84% of college admissions counselors say race/ethnicity has limited or no influence

4/10 of 18-24 year olds enroll in college

By race



41% of White

36% of Black

36% of Hispanic

65% of Asian

20% of Native or Indigenous

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am truly delighted to welcome you to the Regional Premiere of Joshua Harmon's devilish play *Admissions*. There have been times here at Curious when we have been accused of preaching to the choir, to which I've always replied: "the choir needs to hear the sermon too!" But I highly doubt that we will be hearing anyone say anything like that about this play; with *Admissions*, the "choir" is firmly in the crosshairs.

I love a good contemporary comedy of manners, a stinging satire that simply lets *no one* off the hook. But they are a relative rarity in American theatre these days, even though I firmly believe that it is one of the things the theater absolutely should be doing in our country today.

That's what makes *Admissions* such a unique and wonderful play, and why I am so excited to be able to share the regional premiere with all of you here at Curious. Good comedies of manners hilariously utilize satire to wrestle with hypocrisy, forcing all of us to confront our own behavior and beliefs. Jesse Green, in The New York Times, praised *Admissions* as "lancing the boil of our own self-deception." I love that vivid description of how this play brilliantly confronts the pieties that so many "woke" white liberals hold so very desperately.

Good satire makes us think critically about people that we may not initially recognize as ourselves, leaving us with lingering questions after the laughter fades away, questions in this play such as: what price are you willing to pay for the success of your child? Who gets to define diversity? Is it wrong to leverage advantage into opportunity in life?

Certainly, what makes these questions dramatically compelling are precisely their complicated nature; they are exciting because they don't reduce the conversation, they complicate it. Because in reality, there are no easy answers, and there is no right or wrong. If you think (like I do) that compelling art is clear thinking about complicated issues, then *Admissions* is going to be the play for you – enjoy!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely reading 'Chip Walton'.

Chip Walton
Producing Artistic Director

GO DEEPER

A graphic consisting of several black arrows of varying lengths, all pointing towards the right, located below the 'GO DEEPER' text.

To learn more about *Admissions*, go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website: [CuriousTheatre.org/event/admissions](https://curioustheatre.org/event/admissions)

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

Ask what “Affirmative Action” means to a room full of theatregoers and chances are you’ll get ten (or more) definitions. The phrase, fraught with controversy in the past several decades, has never had one universal definition. Contrary to popular belief, affirmative action is not a specific plan, policy, or law. Rather, “affirmative action” refers to a number of programs that seek to increase access to college, employment, and loans for historically disadvantaged groups, creating more social equity.

The first reference to affirmative action was made by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 in an executive order directing government contractors to take “affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.”

Kennedy’s order was issued during the years of Jim Crow, lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Riders, and Martin Luther King Jr.’s jailing, along with other executive orders from Kennedy attempting to desegregate interstate buses, and as part of a growing movement towards Federal involvement in Civil Rights.

Federal law requires any organization receiving federal funding to develop and implement affirmative action plans. As public colleges and universities are considered federal contractors, they are bound by this. Many private schools have followed suit.

Initially, some universities established quotas in order to achieve a demographically diverse student body; these quotas were struck down by the Supreme Court in the 1978 decision in *California v. Bakke*. Due to the controversy and publicity around the issue of quotas, many people mistakenly assume that quotas are the heart of affirmative action.

Today, one of the most common forms of affirmative action in college admissions is that of racial preferences. A preference occurs when a group of applicants is more likely to be admitted than other applicants with similar or better qualifications due to other factors. These preferences can include race as well as other categories such as athletes, children of alumni, people with disabilities, and veterans.

Eight states have enacted laws banning the consideration of race in university admissions. However, Colorado is not one of these states. A ballot issue to remove affirmative action programs in Colorado was narrowly defeated by voters in 2008. Of 13 public four-year universities in Colorado, three report considering race as one factor in admissions.



Since its inception in the 1960s, affirmative action has remained controversial. National public opinion polls have yielded mixed results and largely depend on how the question is worded. Those responding to polls tend to broadly support programs to increase diversity in general but tend to oppose specific consideration of race as an admissions criterion.

Those who support affirmative action programs say that diversity is important in any school or workplace and that minority enrollments would fall dramatically without such programs. They argue that such programs help to compensate for past injustices.

Common arguments from those who oppose affirmative action include charges of “reverse discrimination” and unconstitutionality. Critics have also said that it was intended to be a temporary program and they believe enough changes have been made so programs are no longer needed.

Last summer, the Trump administration moved to discourage race-based admissions by eliminating 24 federal guidance documents that it deemed “unnecessary, outdated, inconsistent with existing law, or otherwise improper.” By rescinding these policies, along with similar guidance for K-12 schools, the Department of Justice is encouraging schools to use “race-neutral” methods in determining admissions.

In one of the biggest recent legal challenges to affirmative action, Asian-American students at Harvard University asserted that school discriminated against Asian-Americans in its admissions process. In October last year, a federal court upheld that Harvard’s admission process was appropriate. While it remains to be seen if the Supreme Court will review this decision, it is likely that affirmative action programs will continue to be tested in the courts for years to come due to opposition from conservative groups and the appointment of more conservative judges on the Supreme Court and across the judicial system.

Many universities, including those in Colorado, have said they will continue their current admissions policies. In particular, the University of Colorado has taken steps to ensure its admissions program would stand up to challenges. Their process considers a number of factors such as a parents’ education level, parents’ income, and neighborhood poverty to determine a student’s socioeconomic status in addition to race to help level the playing field and increase diversity.

Six decades and numerous court challenges later, affirmative action is still hotly debated yet loosely defined. As America inches towards (and more recently away from) racial equity, affirmative action is one of the few examples that truly attempt to combat systemic injustice. Yet, as we see in *Admissions*, affirmative action can be easily weaponized and demonized by those who perceive they are directly impacted by the policy.



To learn more about *Admissions*, go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website: **[CuriousTheatre.org/event/admissions](https://curioustheatre.org/event/admissions)**

CURIOUS THEATRE COMPANY

presents

admissions

by Joshua Harmon
Directed by Chip Walton

CAST

Tammy Meneghini*, *Sherri Rosen-Mason*
Sam Gregory*, *Bill Mason*
Colin Covert, *Charlie Luther Mason*
Martha Harmon Pardee, *Ginnie Peters*
Kathryn Gray, *Roberta Russert*

SETTING

Hillcrest, a boarding school in rural New Hampshire.

TIME

It begins just before Christmas, and ends shortly after Easter,
during the 2015-16 academic year.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Creative Consultant, Sabin Epstein
Scenic and Lighting Design by Charles Dean Packard
Costume design by Linda Morken
Sound Design by El Armstrong
Prop Design by **Chip Walton** and Soleil Kohl
Stage Manager, Lisa Tinker
Assistant Stage Manager, Shay Goddard
Scenic Construction, You Want What Productions
Wardrobe/Run Crew, Frieda Celeste
Board Operator, Rachel Reidenbaugh

***Admissions* will be performed without an intermission.**

Admissions is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc., A Concord Theatricals Company.
Originally produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, 2018

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Bold = Curious Artistic Company Member

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



BIOS



Colin Covert (Charlie Luther Mason) is a senior theatre major at Denver School of the Arts. Colin was last seen on the Curious stage as Josh in *Your Best One*. Other recent acting credits include Boulton in *Pericles*, Prince of Tyre, Ned Weeks in *The Normal Heart*, Shrek in *Shrek the Musical*, Arturo Ui

in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, Chip Tolentino in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, Larry in *Wall 2.0!* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Artful Dodger in *Oliver!*, and Lisandre in *The Bores*.



Kathryn Gray (Roberta Russert) first worked with Curious in *Praying For Rain* as Miss K and followed that with Gert in *Fuddy Meers*, Nancy Shirley in *Frozen*, numerous roles, including Bix Beaver in *Bright Ideas*, Nat in *Rabbit Hole*, Mrs. Gottlieb in *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, Dottie in *Good People*,

and Momo in *The Humans*. Working in Denver theatre since 1978, Kathryn has worked with the Denver Center Theatre Company, Hunger Artists Ensemble Theatre, Paragon Theatre, Denver Civic Theatre, Mizel Arts and Culture Center, HorseChart Theatre Company, University of Denver Theatre Program, and the University of Colorado Denver College of Arts & Media.



Sam Gregory (Bill Mason) last appeared at Curious as Ray in *White Guy on the Bus*. Most recently, Sam was Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at the Denver Center Theatre Company where he has appeared in 49 productions. Other Regional theaters

include: Theaterworks in Hartford, CT., multiple seasons for the Colorado, California, and Alabama Shakespeare Festivals, the Seattle, Milwaukee and San Jose Repertories, Cleveland Playhouse, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, American Players Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center: New Playwrights Festival, Chautauqua Theatre Company, Two River Theatre Company, Northern Stage and the Eureka Theatre. And a long time ago, he did some TV shows including *NY Undercover*, *One Life to Live* and *As the World Turns*.



Tammy Meneghini (Sherri Rosen-Mason) has appeared locally in *Henry IV – Parts I and II* (Mistress Quickly), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Mistress Quickly), *Measure for Measure* (Overdone), *Hamlet* (Gertrude), *The Fantasticks* (Father), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Jean Louise) with

the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, *Gideon's Knot* with square product theatre, *Reason* and *Master Class* with Maya Productions. Her two original solo performance pieces, *The Great Goddess Bazaar* (Ovation Award, Best Solo Performance) and *Elizabeth I – In Her Own Words*, continue to tour out of the state and country. Most recently *Elizabeth I – In Her Own Words*, was a featured festival award winner at the United Solo Festival, NYC and the 2020 Q Solo Festival, in Albuquerque, NM. She is the co-creator of *Let the Sunshine In – Songs from the Musicals of Galt MacDermot*, that she continues to perform with music partner, Eric Svejcar and the "Sunshine Funk Band". She is an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, Department of Theatre & Dance, one of the founding members of the Colorado Artists Safety Alliance, and a proud part of the amazing team at Articulate Real & Clear, Denver.

BIOS



Martha Harmon Pardee (Ginnie Peters) has been acting professionally in Denver and Boulder for the past 30 years. Previously she performed in *Up* and *Fiction* at Curious. Other roles include Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, and Abby in *The*

Mercy Seat (Paragon Theatre Company); various roles at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival; Mrs. Gardner in *Pride and Prejudice* (Denver Center Theater Company); and various performances with Stories on Stage. Martha has recorded approximately 3000 audiobooks and currently teaches Voice Over class at the DCPA.

Joshua Harmon (Playwright) His play *Bad Jews* received its world premiere at Roundabout Underground and was the first production to transfer to the Roundabout's Laura Pels Theatre (Outer Critics Circle and Lucille Lortel Award nominations, Best Play). It has since become the third most-produced play in the United States this season and transferred to London's West End after sell-out runs at Theatre Royal Bath and the St. James Theatre. His newest play *Significant Other* opened at Roundabout this summer. His work has been produced and developed by Manhattan Theatre Club, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Hangar Theatre, Ars Nova, and Actor's Express, where he was the 2010-2011 National New Play Network Playwright-in-Residence. He has received fellowships from MacDowell, Atlantic Center for the Arts, SPACE at Ryder Farm, and the Eudora Welty Foundation. Joshua is a recent graduate of Juilliard and at work on commissions for Roundabout Theatre Company and Lincoln Center Theater.

El Armstrong (Sound & Projection Designer) is an award-winning sound designer whose works have been heard in theaters and films all over the world. His work was last seen at Curious in *The Skeleton Crew*. He is a Primetime Emmy® nominated video editor and sound editor/mixer who has worked on several Grammy® nominated projects. El is also a recipient of a Henry Award for Special Achievement in Theater Technology and Engineering. In his spare time, he also directs, with recent productions including *Godspell*, *Voices In The Dark*, *Dietrich and Chevalier*, *Rashomon*, *Jekyll And Hide*, *Dracula* and *She Kills Monsters*.

Sabin Epstein (Creative Consultant) has been a Resident Director for the American Conservatory Theatre (A.C.T., San Francisco); Georgia Shakespeare Festival (Atlanta), and A Noise Within (Los Angeles). His work was most recently seen at Curious as Creative Consultant for *The Intelligent Homosexuals Guide....* He has been a guest director for the Alabama, Oregon, Utah and Southwest Shakespeare Festivals, the Juilliard School (Drama Division), The Guthrie Theatre Actor Training Program and the Denver Center Theatre Company, among others. As an educator, he was Head of Performance Skills for the National Theatre Conservatory (Denver), Head of Acting for the Old Globe MFA Actor Training Program (San Diego), Conservatory Director for the American Conservatory Theatre Actor Training Program and an Adjunct Instructor at the University of Southern California.

Linda Morken (Costume Designer) is the resident designer for Boulder Dinner Theatre Stage. Linda has designed and worked on many regional as well as national productions including several that have won awards including three Colorado Theatre Guild Henry Awards, two Denver Post Ovation awards for continued excellence in costume design,

Boulder Daily Camera's Best of Boulder, Marlow Awards as well as multiple award nominations. Linda previously designed *Skeleton Crew* and *The Thanksgiving Play* at Curious. A longtime Colorado Resident, Linda is originally from Minnesota and holds a Bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University.

Charles Dean Packard (Scenic and Lighting Designer) was the Executive Producer at the Aurora Fox for many years. Notable productions include *Metamorphoses*, *The Color Purple*, and *Black Elk Speaks*. Over the past 20 years, Charles has provided designs for many area theaters including The Fox, Curious Theatre Company, Phamaly, and Magic Moments. He has been nominated for and won numerous awards including the Henry award for *Metamorphoses* and the True West Award for Phamaly's *The Wiz*. His work last appeared on the Curious stage for *The Thanksgiving Play*. One of his career favorites, *Bug*, was also here at Curious.

Lisa Tinker (Stage Manager) is joining Curious for her second production, having last worked on crew for *The Thanksgiving Play*. Some notable credits include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (KC Rep), *An Octoroon* (Unicorn Theatre), *King Lear* (Kansas City Actors Theatre), *Hana's Suitcase* (The Coterie) and *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (Central City Opera). She has an MFA in Stage Management from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Chip Walton (Director and Producing Artistic Director) co-founded Curious Theatre Company in 1997 and has served as Producing Artistic Director for the entire history of the organization. Named Denver's "2005 Theatre Person of the Year," he has directed 50 shows for Curious over the past 21 years and his work has garnered more than 100

local and national awards. In 2008, Curious was honored with the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Chip has served as the President and Vice President of the National New Play Network, a network of professional, non-profit theatres across the country dedicated to the development and production of new plays for the American theatre. Chip was also selected in the inaugural class of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellows, recognizing exceptional non-profit leaders with significant potential for contribution, change and leadership in Colorado's nonprofit sector; additionally, he served on the Board of Directors of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as their first Community Trustee. Chip has participated in the Visiting Professionals program at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, as well as serving on the Leadership Group for *Imagine 2020: Creating a Future for Denver's Culture*. He has directed in the National New Play Network Showcase of New Plays, the Kennedy Center's MFA Playwriting Festival in Washington, D.C., and accepted a National Theatre Company Award in New York for Curious from the prestigious American Theatre Wing. Most recently, Chip was honored to serve as a 2017 Aspen Ideas Festival Speaker.

Actors' Equity Association ("AEA" or "Actors' Equity"), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org

CURIOUS NEW VOICES

"I FOUND MY PURPOSE, PASSION,
AND PLATFORM THROUGH THE HELP
OF CURIOUS." -LAMARIAH AMINAH

"CURIOUS NEW VOICES HAS GIVEN ME AND
OTHER KIDS RANGING IN AGE, CLASS, RACE,
AND GENDER, A CHANCE TO MANIFEST THEIR
EXPERIENCES AS YOUTHFUL SCRIBES GUIDED
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I CAN NO LONGER MERELY
JOT POETRY IN A DEAD
NOTEBOOK BECAUSE CNV
HAS ALLOWED MY TEXT TO
LIVE INSIDE OF BREATHING
BODIES." - MARIO LOUIS GONZALES



CNV
CURIOUS NEW VOICES

"CURIOUS PRESENTED MY
WORK TO THE WORLD AND
TOLD ME 'THEATRE NEEDS
YOUR VOICE'. NOW I CAN'T
ESCAPE IT-THE ART OF
STORYTELLING RUNS THROUGH
MY VEINS." -CASSANDRA HSIAO

Summer Intensive: July 6-26, 2020

Whether you've written a play before or just have a stirring story within you, this program can change your life and change the world. If you or someone you know aged 15-22 is interested in this summer's Playwriting Intensive, check out CuriousTheatre.org/summer-intensive or contact Dee Covington at dee@curioustheatre.org.

THE IDEOLOGY CONFLICT

Every day, we make hundreds of choices – some meaningful, big choices and some seemingly insignificant. Those choices are determined by our values, our ideology, pragmatism and, of course, our own self-interest. But what happens when our self-interest is at odds with our ideology? When our overall views say one thing, but doing that would negatively impact or even harm ourselves? What do we do then?

This question, at the core of *Admissions*, is not a foreign one: we've all faced this conflict to varying degrees and we see it play out in our national dialogue constantly. We often justify choosing our self-interest by explaining (to ourselves and others) why this particular instance is unique and therefore not outside our values.

Take, for example, a climate activist out and about – perhaps at Curious. She forgot her reusable bottle and is thirsty, so she buys a bottle of water. She knows that a plastic bottle isn't great for the environment, but it is a calculated choice in the circumstances.

On the other end of the spectrum, we can look to the US Senate Republicans, including Colorado's Cory Gardner, and their recent decision to hold a presidential impeachment trial without witnesses or documents at a time when three-quarters of the country felt more testimony was warranted. The desire to hold onto power outweighed all pull for fairness in democracy.

Other examples could be a pro-life advocate who justifies his mistress or daughter having an abortion. Or a pro-choice advocate who shops at Hobby Lobby. NBC burying the Harvey Weinstein story for years, choosing money over truth in journalism. The Catholic Church moving priests from one posting to another, for decades valuing reputation

over children's lives. Gerrymandering. White flight. Almond milk. Fast fashion. Amazon.

In this exceedingly complicated world, it's impossible to "do the right thing" all the time. It is always a balancing act. Yet, there are key moments when we are confronted with an absolute choice of ideology vs. self-interest. In *Admissions*, Sherri has the added challenge of her choice being her ideology vs. her child's interest; which for many parents is no choice at all.

Education is a deeply personal and deeply divisive issue. Here in Colorado, charter schools have been a source of contention for years in the Denver School Board elections. Do they offer an opportunity or do they further pull resources from public schools? Are charter schools just a new version of white flight? How do we balance the best for our child against what's best for all children?

Admissions asks white liberals (a large segment of the Curious audience) to grapple with the challenge of access to higher education directly and also poses a larger question about values to the full audience. What are we really, truly willing to personally compromise in service to our beliefs and ideology?



ABOUT CURIOUS

WE ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES THROUGH PROVOCATIVE MODERN THEATRE

Curious works at the intersection of art and social justice, using professional theatre to connect our community with pressing issues and social justice partners taking action in Colorado.



no guts no story

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DISCUSS

WHAT NEXT?

At Curious, we're here to engage you in important issues. We use theatre as a catalyst for thinking about big, often uncomfortable topics and a way to connect you to vital steps forward to improving the world for everyone.

DISCUSS ???

Some of these questions contain mild spoilers. Read early at your own risk.

1. In general, do you support affirmative action in higher education? Why or why not?
2. Parents often say they'll do anything for their children and recent admissions scandals have proven that to be true. Do you think Sherri and Bill were right to interfere in Charlie's decision on college? Why or why not?
3. Genie says to Sherri, "You want things to look different, but I'm not sure you want them to be different." Can you think of a time in your own life when you wanted perception to change without actual change needing to occur?
4. Charlie makes very bold points about privilege and fairness at the end of the play, a polar shift from his earlier impulses. What do you think really drove the change?
5. How do you think those in power or with privilege should push for change? Is giving up their own 'seat at the table' the right thing to do?

"IS THE DEFINITION OF 'FAIR'
SOMETHING A BUNCH OF WHITE
GUYS MADE UP RIGHT BEFORE
THEY FOUNDED ALL THE
PREP SCHOOLS?" -CHARLIE TO SHERRI

"YOU'RE HAPPY TO MAKE THE
WORLD A BETTER PLACE, AS
LONG AS IT DOESN'T COST
YOU ANYTHING." -CHARLIE TO HIS PARENTS

GO DEEPER:

To learn more about *Admissions*, go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website: CuriousTheatre.org/event/admissions

THE COST OF COLLEGE

It is impossible to talk about access to higher education without talking about money. Costs have ballooned for students in recent decades and are growing at a rate far above inflation.

\$1.56 trillion

US Student Loan Debt

Cost of college
increasing

8X

faster
than wages

2/3 of students today
graduate with debt

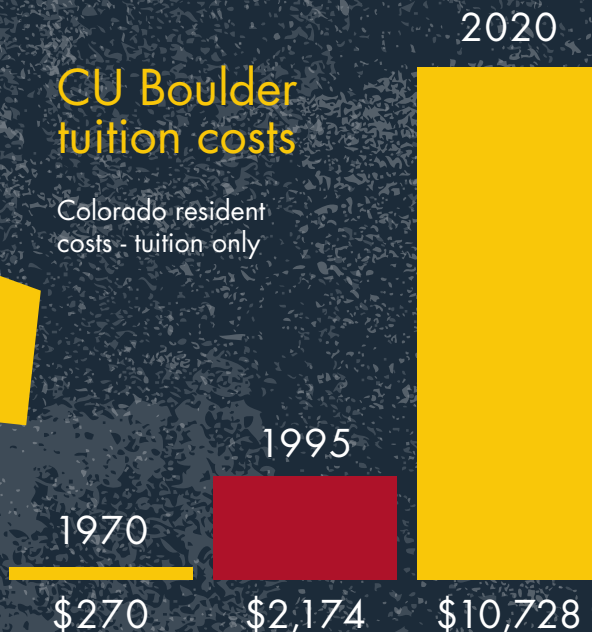


Average debt
of \$29,900



**CU Boulder
tuition costs**

Colorado resident
costs - tuition only



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