

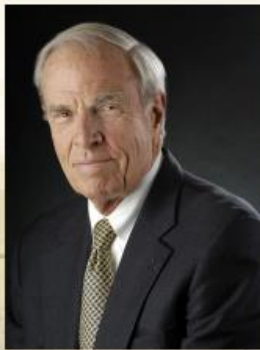
Benson's March 2019 newsletter

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A Message from the President

March 2019

Dear Alumni and Friends:

I recently asked for a report to be developed about the future of higher education in general and the University of Colorado in particular. Even though I will retire from CU in July, it's important for university leadership, including my successor, to scan the horizon to see where our enterprise is going in the next decade or two or three.

Some findings are what you would expect – how electronic delivery and online education will continue to change higher education. The demographic trends that will impact our student body. The move toward specialized certificates and professional master's degrees. One finding was particularly interesting: We will need more liberal arts graduates.

The pendulum that swung in recent years toward degrees in STEM fields is starting to swing back. Let me be clear -- STEM degrees remain critical to society and our university, and we will continue our focus on them.

But as automation continues to reach into many aspects of life, so does artificial intelligence (AI). AI and machine learning (ML) will increasingly do work humans do, particularly in computer programming and financial services. AI and ML will get more sophisticated.

It will be essential to assess data and suggested decisions from multiple sources with competing goals. You might call this “critical thinking.” It will also be important to evaluate competing viewpoints (even if generated by AI or ML), communicate evaluations and make decisions based on these evaluations using business, technical, aesthetic and ethical considerations. You might call the aggregate of that “creative problem solving.” Graduates with the “human” skills a liberal arts education fosters – communication, problem solving, leadership – should have a leg up.

The number of STEM majors and graduates has increased dramatically in recent years at CU and elsewhere, and rightfully so. Yet we cannot lose that fundamental purpose of a university – to prepare a well-rounded person who will be an asset to society.

When I considered attending CU Boulder for my undergraduate geology degree, I looked at another university with a highly specialized curriculum. The focus would have been on geology and not much else. It was (and is) a fine institution, but I needed a more well-rounded course of study, so I chose CU Boulder.

I’m glad I did. While most of my professional life was spent in geology, a grounding in the liberal arts allowed me to think beyond my field and branch out to various business and political ventures. It helped me have a successful career and life.

The knock these days on liberal arts degrees is that they do not lead to lucrative careers. Certainly an engineering major will usually earn more than an English major. But that doesn't mean an English major won't have a successful career and life.

A few years back we surveyed the leadership of Colorado's top 25 public companies. Of those, half earned undergraduate degrees in liberal arts fields. Three-quarters earned advanced degrees. All were extremely successful in leading their companies. It highlights the statistic that 40 percent of liberal arts graduates go on to graduate or professional schools, where they specialize.

A liberal arts degree can be a ticket to economic mobility. While most of those graduates will likely earn less than STEM graduates, that doesn't mean they won't be successful and productive. People who go into fields such as teaching, social work or the arts go in with eyes wide open about the economic prospects. A salary is not the sole measure of success. Their contributions to their communities and society are immeasurable.

It's important for liberal arts graduates to translate their skills into needs in the job market. But one of the hallmarks of the liberal arts is being able to adapt. I'm happy to see a resurgence of the liberal arts. It's interesting that the future of our university is so steeped in its past and a classical, well-rounded liberal arts education. Thankfully, teaching people how to learn, how to think and how to scan the horizon will always be in style.

For feedback, contact officeofthepresident@cu.edu

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce D. Benson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bruce D. Benson
President



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In the news



[CU Anschutz celebrates those who invest in CU](#)

My wife Marcy and I attended the CU Anschutz Medical Campus celebration of donors last week. It was great to visit with the people who invest in CU, helping to solve significant health care and societal problems, and also adding value to the tremendous work on the campus. The reasons they donate are myriad and often deeply personal. We were struck by two foundations that were highlighted at the event, and wanted to share with you a [couple of videos](#) focusing on their efforts and impact.

[CU community members recognized for building inclusive excellence](#)

Congratulations to this year's CU President's Diversity Award winners: Stephanie Nwagwu, Marcus Marable and Simon Feseha, CU School of Medicine; Jesse Perez and Martin Garnar, UCCS; and Jamie Newton, CU Denver. The award recognizes significant achievements in developing a culturally and intellectually diverse university community.

CU on the Air podcast



[Seeing isn't believing: CU Denver center masters the science of truth in audio/video](#)

[Catalin Grigoras](#) and Cole Whitecotton at CU Denver's [National Center for Media Forensics](#) discuss their research on digital manipulation – such as deepfakes – plus scientific methodology and analysis in media forensics that assist law enforcement and government agencies.

Spotlight on Alumni



[Meet the Buff who's the new voice of Denver's airport train](#)

The next time you're traveling through Denver, longtime Colorado news anchor Kim Christiansen will be among the first to welcome you to the Mile High City. Christiansen, lead anchor for Denver's 9News broadcast station, won the airport's contest to become the train's new female voice.

FOUR CAMPUSES UNITED ALL FOUR:**ONE**



[The Bard in your backyard: Shakespeare covers Colorado](#)

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival announced an ambitious initiative to bring live, professional performances to all 64 Colorado counties in the next decade. The \$3.2 million Shakespeare Across Colorado initiative will reach an estimated 180,000 audience members in community theaters, school cafeterias and other venues across the state.

CU Advocates Program

Colorado needs healthy research universities that produce a highly educated workforce, grow our economy, attract business and industry, and engage in research that generates jobs, creates companies and improves lives. With your help we can keep CU - and Colorado - strong.

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News from the campuses

CU BOULDER

[Novel 5-minute workout improves blood pressure, may boost your brain:](#) CU Boulder researchers have launched a clinical trial to learn more about the ultra-time-efficient exercise known as Inspiratory Muscle Strength Training.

CU COLORADO SPRINGS

[New accelerated master's program develops public service leadership:](#) UCCS political science majors will have a new opportunity to earn an accelerated master's degree in public administration.

CU DENVER

[Getting out in front of Denver trends:](#) CityCenter invites community leaders to imagine a great region.

CU ANSCHUTZ

[Researchers awarded grants for health studies:](#) Rose Community Foundation announced 'Heart and Soul' philanthropic initiatives to advance cardiology and arthritis research at CU Anschutz.



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Office of the President, University of Colorado

1800 Grant Street, Suite 800, Denver, CO 80203

p: 303 860 5600 | f: 303 860 5610 | www.cu.edu | officeofthepresident@cu.edu

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