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University of Colorado

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# A Message from the President

## April 2018

Dear friends:

When I started my job at CU 10 years ago I was already familiar with the university as an alumnus, volunteer and donor, not to mention my work on higher education reform panels for several governors. But I also had a lot to learn about our complex and far-flung enterprise.

One program that started at the same time I did caught my attention because of its intriguing name – the [Bachelor of Innovation](#) (BI) degree program on our Colorado Springs campus. The Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts are standard at universities,



so I wondered what was different about the BI.

The BI is the brainchild of UCCS Computer Science Professor Terry Boulton, who had tried to start the program at other institutions. At UCCS he found an administration willing to think outside the box and create a unique degree program.

The difference between the BI degree and a BA or BS is in the courses surrounding a student's major. A business major, for example, will get a depth of knowledge in a specialty area such as finance or marketing. The BI is a family of degrees that provides an innovation core curriculum and a cross-discipline core around their major that gives students a breadth of skills to innovate.

Boulton developed the idea after hearing from employers about skills that were missing in recent graduates and new hires, and experiencing that lack directly in his own entrepreneurial venture. Common threads included presentation skills, the ability to work in teams, taking initiative and communicating with people in disparate fields. They set out to fill that void and now, 10 years on, the concept and program have proven quite successful.

When I first heard about it I wondered if innovation could be taught. Absolutely, says program director Dr. Nina Polok. She and her colleagues define innovation as the transformation of an idea into impact, and then asked what skills are necessary to make it happen. It's a process with steps that can be taught.

She uses the example of an iPhone. Certainly it was innovative, but no one person designed it or built it. It takes a team and, as Polok stresses, innovation is a team sport. With that starting point, faculty developed a program in which students work in teams of typically four. All courses in the innovation core are team taught, so professors model teamwork. Some faculty are recruited for their specialty skillsets,

for instance in startup businesses, social entrepreneurship or cross-disciplinary work.

The BI takes students outside their comfort zones. They learn the language and viewpoints of people beyond their major by taking courses in a different discipline. Students must choose from one of four cross-discipline cores: business, creative communication, engineering and globalization. For example, an engineering major is required to learn how businesspeople think, or to understand how creativity works by engaging those in the arts. They also learn seemingly straightforward concepts too often overlooked, such as how to get help in an area they are unfamiliar with.

The result is students and graduates who are action oriented, resourceful and resilient. They're ready to tackle problems and are not daunted by areas where they might lack particular skills.

The BI mindset is permeating the UCCS campus. Initially focused on students in engineering, business and computer science, the concept has expanded to areas as diverse as inclusive early childhood education and the visual and performing arts. When it started a decade ago, it had about 100 students. Today the number is pushing 500. There are nearly 220 graduates of the program (some 115 in engineering). The BI has the added benefit of bringing innovation to the way CU approves majors and degrees. Faculty are thinking outside the box and students, many of whom have jobs before they graduate, are the beneficiaries.

Alumni of the program are creating new businesses, running Kickstarter campaigns to fund startups, opening craft breweries and developing video games. They are in high demand.

As the BI program enters its second decade, I have high hopes for its continued success and am thrilled CU offers a degree that lives up to its unique name.

For feedback, contact [officeofthepresident@cu.edu](mailto:officeofthepresident@cu.edu)

Sincerely,



Bruce Benson  
President



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## IN THE NEWS



### [A sign of the future: Bioscience 3 heralded for innovation to come](#)

Yesterday marked a major milestone for the University of Colorado as we celebrated the groundbreaking for the Bioscience 3 building at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. We've worked many years to get to this point. In addition to the shoveling of dirt, state and

university dignitaries joined key city and private-sector members in ushering in the newest addition to the Fitzsimons Innovation Community in Aurora.



### **[40 Under 40: Six with CU ties make their mark as leaders](#)**

Once again, the Denver Business Journal has recognized several CU affiliated up-and-coming business leaders in its annual [40 Under 40 class](#). Congratulations to these young innovators; we look forward to more great things to come. Honorees include:

- [Maria Delgado](#), CU Denver Ph.D. candidate, instructor
- [Janiece Mackey](#), CU Denver alumna, co-founder and executive director of Young Aspiring Americans for Social & Political Activism
- [Patrick Kneeland](#), CU Anschutz SOM alumnus, UCHealth University Hospital
- [Josett Valdez](#), CU Denver alumna, chief operating officer, American Red Cross
- [Shan Venkatsammy](#), CU Denver alumnus, senior business analyst, Population Health, UCHealth
- [Dominic Weilmünster](#), CU Denver, principal, Business Center Discipline Leader





### [Denver's rooftops are going green: What does it mean?](#)

Fifty-four percent of Denver voters passed the green roof initiative in November 2017, requiring rooftop gardens on buildings with at least 25,000 square feet of gross floor area. CU Denver professor Leila Tolderlund talks with host Ken McConnellogue, V.P. of university communication, about what's to come and how we can expect the cityscape to change over the next years.

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## ALL FOUR: **COLORADO**



### [Answering the call: Line9 puts pharmacy school to action](#)

Pharmacy student volunteers team up with Channel 9 to offer advice to callers. The 90-minute phone marathon offers a crash course in stress control and mental cleansing and provides CU, volunteers and Channel 9 viewers so much more, participants say.

## SPOTLIGHT ON **ALUMNI**



### **CU Colorado Springs alumni 'masters at music'**

An unlikely duo, Jon Gillin and Mark Young both felt an overwhelming sense of uncertainty before approaching college, but their time at UCCS left them prepared for business ownership and ready to accomplish a great deal in the Colorado Springs community.

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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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# CU Scoop

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“ATLAS is a home for polymaths”

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## NEWS FROM OUR CAMPUSES

### CU BOULDER

[\*\*A pill that staves off aging? It's on the horizon:\*\*](#) A CU Boulder study indicates that taking the natural dietary supplement nicotinamide riboside daily mimics caloric restriction.

### CU COLORADO SPRINGS

[\*\*Computer science faculty among research leaders at national level:\*\*](#) Among all areas of computer science, UCCS ranked in the top 100 for research publications in year-to-date rankings each year since 2011.

### CU DENVER

[\*\*Impressio, CU Denver making safer football helmets with NFL grant:\*\*](#) A startup led by engineering faculty wins second football helmet innovation contest.

### CU ANSCHUTZ

[\*\*Traveling exhibit asks viewers to confront genocide:\*\*](#) 'Deadly Medicine' tells chilling story of how healers turned into killers.





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