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University of Colorado

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A Message from the President

May 2018

Dear Alumni and Friends,

I recently received a letter from the parent of one of our students that demonstrates free speech is alive and well at CU.

The parent wrote, “We’ve attended talks by Milo Yiannopoulos and Charles Murray. Both events were managed phenomenally well by the campus police. Neither speaker was interrupted, walked out on, or shouted down. And the attendees were safe. Charles Murray remarked about how exceptional it was to come to a campus and actually get to speak and answer questions.”

When the right-wing provocateur Yiannopoulos spoke at the University of California, Berkeley weeks before his CU appearance, a riot ensued, with smashed windows and burned cars. When Murray, author of the controversial book “The Bell Curve” spoke at Middlebury College, he was shouted down and couldn’t continue. A faculty member was hospitalized after the protest turned violent.

So what makes CU different, a place where provocative and controversial speakers are heard with civility and respect? The answer is we have been working for a decade to ensure a culture where our campuses value and promote free speech. Our bedrock

belief is that we must teach students how to think, not what to think. Part of that is hearing varied – and sometimes uncomfortable or even ludicrous – viewpoints.

This isn't a conservative issue or a liberal issue. It's an issue for everyone who cares about our society and its future. And it's one liberals and conservatives must address together, much as we do with our [Center for Western Civilization, Thought and Policy](#), which I have written about [previously](#).

Other universities are following our lead, including UC Berkeley, which is starting a center modeled on ours. Steven Hayward, CU's first Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy, is leading their effort.

Fostering free speech also takes a united front from CU leadership – from the four campus chancellors to the Board of Regents to me. CU Boulder Chancellor Phil DiStefano gave his perspective in a [recent communique](#), when he noted that discussion and debate are essential to enhancing educational experiences, creating and advancing knowledge, and ensuring a thriving democracy.

CU embraces free speech, so it's important that our policies match our principles and practices. I'm pleased that the Board of Regents is considering a provision of the Laws of the Regents that, for the first time, will make CU's commitment to freedom of expression part of our highest governing documents.

CU campuses are places where ideas not only *can* clash, but *should* clash. It's only when they are subject to scrutiny that knowledge advances and learning occurs. We're proposing the Laws of the Regents recognize that "the university's faculty, staff and students have a responsibility to protect the university as a forum for the free expression of ideas." We also want it clear that "the free exchange of ideas includes not only the right to speak, but the right to listen."

I'm not advocating that anyone needs to agree with someone else's ideas and theories. In fact, I encourage those who disagree to join the conversation. The correct response to offensive or objectionable ideas is to challenge them through reasoned debate, not suppression.

Respecting someone's right to hold and express beliefs is different from saying every belief is entitled to respect. Some people believe the Earth is flat. I don't respect that opinion; I find it silly. The United States Supreme Court framed the issue when it found that flag burning, an act I personally abhor, is constitutionally permitted speech. The decision, which both Justice Thurgood Marshall and Justice Antonin Scalia joined, explained that "a principal function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. It may indeed best serve its high purpose when it induces a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger."

Although our country is divided in many ways, higher education must not shy away from contentious issues. We must give faculty the ability to engage and teach without fear that they will be attacked for taking on tough issues. We must give the students the opportunities and tools to critically evaluate what they hear so they can decide for themselves what to believe.

Our campuses have hosted Milo and Murray, Republican presidential debates and Democratic presidential candidates, Vicente Fox debating Nigel Farage, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. All have been welcome without the violence and incivility we have seen elsewhere. The marriage of policies and practices will help ensure that free speech always is welcome at CU. Other campuses call themselves the free speech campuses, but we can honestly call CU the free speech university.

For feedback, contact officeofthepresident@cu.edu

Sincerely,



Bruce Benson
President



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IN THE NEWS



[Diversity Award recipients honored for contributions to inclusive excellence](#)

Congratulations and a big thank you to the 2018 President's Diversity Award recipients. The honor recognizes significant achievements of faculty, staff, students and academic or administrative units in developing a culturally and intellectually diverse university. This year's honorees are Violeta Chapin, clinical professor, CU Boulder; Jasmine Fitzgerald, student, CU Denver; and A Queer Endeavor, CU Boulder.



[A decade in: What's been done? What's to come?](#)

I was pleased to be featured in this month's [CU on the Air](#) podcast. It gave me the chance to talk about some of our accomplishments, our outstanding students, faculty and programs, and building an inclusive and collaborative culture of all types of diversity – from ethnic diversity to intellectual diversity. I invite you to listen.

A chance to tell us how you're doing

It's important that we get meaningful feedback on the job we are doing, and there's no better place to obtain it than from our alumni. Two years ago, we completed the first alumni survey that mined data from graduates of all four CU campuses, from recent graduates to those like me who graduated decades ago. The [results](#) were interesting and insightful and have helped us improve how we operate. We looked at your perceptions of how your CU education helped you (or didn't) in your career, what type of work you do, and your sense of the value of your CU education, among other things.

We will soon replicate the web-based survey to continue to glean insight about how CU alumni fare after graduation. You can expect to see a communication from me shortly after the Memorial Day holiday that will direct you to the survey instrument. I want to thank you in advance for participating. Your feedback helps us understand not only the work of the university, but also its impact on individuals and communities.

SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI



[CU Denver alumna inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame](#)

Leslie Foster is a longtime nonprofit leader who lifts up others to fulfill their potential, while making communities work for diverse populations. Since 1990, Foster has been the president of The Gathering Place, which serves women, children and people who are transgender who are experiencing poverty.

ALL FOUR: **COLORADO**



[Outreach initiative gives public chance to weave, wear replica Native American sandals](#)

An extensive collection of Southwestern prehistoric sandals is housed in the Museum of Natural History at CU Boulder. Because the sandals are ancient artifacts, researchers can't just strap them on to see how well they wear. But a team of scholars — with help from the public — has launched an outreach program called “Walking in Another’s Shoes,” bringing together hand-weavers, runners and a range of scholars.

BECOME A **CU ADVOCATE**

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.

[Become an advocate for CU](#)

CU Advocates Events

Partners:



FOREVERBUFFS
DENVER METRO

May 31

5 - 7 p.m.

CU Alumni Trailblazers

Hear their journeys to success.

Join David Levin, Anthony Pilgliacampo, Leonid Yuffa and Brian Watson.

June 7

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Video Champions

The Emmy Award-winning work of CU Sports Video

Interview by Mark Johnson, voice of the Buffaloes, with Jamie Guy, director of CU Sports Video

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NEWS FROM OUR **CAMPUSES**

CU BOULDER

[Novel antioxidant makes old blood vessels seem young again](#): Older adults who take an

CU COLORADO SPRINGS

[Shatner delivers 'Hope and Innovation' for Bachelor of Innovation gala](#): The science

antioxidant that targets cellular powerhouses see aging of their blood vessels reverse within six weeks.

CU DENVER

Seven years of Boots to Suits: The local partnerships provide student veterans with mentorships, career assistance and more.

fiction icon from the original Star Trek series encourages students to take the lead and explore the future.

CU ANSCHUTZ

Firefighters learn virtual reality: New technology exercise precedes launching of therapy programs for emergency responders.



Make a difference. Support CU today!

GIVE TO CU

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