Tech Connect conference brings IT professionals from all CU campuses together to collaborate, network [1]

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The second annual Tech Connect conference was held Oct. 10-11 at the Arvada Center for the Arts as a chance for the University of Colorado IT offices to connect with their peers across the CU campuses from Boulder, Denver, Anschutz Medical Campus, Colorado Springs, System Administration and Advancement. Tech Connect 2019: Whatever IT Takes was a day-and-a-half interactive event that gave CU IT professionals the opportunity to learn more about IT on other campuses, discuss technology challenges, explore solutions and more.

The theme of Tech Connect 2019 was Whatever IT Takes, which was based on superheroes representing the people in the technology industry and their resilience to problem solve. The basic ideology behind this superhero theme was that tech professionals are not always seen or recognized but they are the ones behind the scenes responsible for keeping things running smoothly.

The agenda from the event had several types of sessions, including:

- **Speed networking** to quickly get to know others from across campuses
- **Lightning talks** were very short presentations lasting only a few minutes with several lightning talks being delivered by different speakers in a single session.
- **Poster sessions** were group discussions or interactive demonstrations about a project, initiative or operational efficiencies.
- **Roundtable discussions** for more of a group discussion about a project, initiative or operational efficiencies.
- **Keynote presentation** by Dr. Christopher Bell, the Director of Graduate Studies and an Associate Professor of Media Studies at UCCS, focused on media messaging and the importance of media literacy.
- **CIO panel** was offered to hear from the CIOs from CU Boulder and CU Denver participated in a panel discussion where they discussed several challenges, successes and processes faced in the tech world at CU.
- **Leadership question and answer sessions** were sessions where leadership representatives from across the CU campuses took questions (live-polling) from the audience.
- **Vendor fair and vendor tech talks** were offered to give CU employees the opportunity to learn about vendors CU already worked with to understand how their company offerings relevant to the IT industry.

“Without a doubt, I make a new and lasting connection at Tech Connect every year. Attending Tech Connect infinitely improves the way we work together and, at the same time, it gives me a sense of belonging and better connection with an incredible network of IT professionals. I can’t think of a richer win-win situation. I truly appreciate all of the time and effort that is
poured into the event by everyone from the coordinators, the speakers, and the participants,” shared Kerry Havens the Associate Director of Enterprise Services at University of Colorado Boulder.

This year’s conference was a big success. Primarily, attendees consisted of employees from the Office of Information Technology (OIT) from each campus, however, the Tech Connect committee hopes to extend to other IT roles in offices outside of OIT, UIS and Advancement in the future.

“One of my favorite parts about Tech Connect, from the people that attended the event to the staff that helped put on the event, was everyone continuing to explore the question “What is possible?”. We are all superheroes in one form or another with our daily jobs at CU. We all help each other accomplish the details of what is truly possible and the great things we can accomplish together at the University of Colorado through collaboration and innovation.”- Philip Curry, Tech Connect Chair and Campus Community & Admissions Application Manager, UIS.

Blended in between informational sessions and discussions were some fun networking opportunities that allowed participants to get to know colleagues on a personal level. Some of these fun aspects included swag bags, vendor door prizes, superhero costume contest, a superhero interactive wall, and superhero buttons for attendees to write their superhero power on while wearing them through the event. Additional highlights include an ice cream bike and a vendor fair with swag. The event came to an end with a happy hour to meet and mingle with all the participants.

“The biggest value for me was I got to meet people that I have emailed and talked on the phone with for years but never met in person. There are humans behind the emails that we don’t get to interact with on a daily bases,” shared Alicia Pickell, Tech Connect committee member and Executive Assistant, UIS.

Below, enjoy photos from the event taken by Leif Larsen:
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