

## **Stories** <sup>[1]</sup>

Submit your own CU story [here](#) <sup>[2]</sup>!

{start-item}

### **Alumni**

#### **Gordon Hamby, '13, CU Denver**

I am a proud alumnus, graduated winter 2013. During my college career at CU Denver I served the university and community in the areas of diversity and inclusion, and student engagement very heavily. I received many awards including the Rosa Parks Diversity Award, Academic Athlete, and the Communication Department's Robley Rhine leadership award. I also served as Student Body President for the 2012/2013 school year. Additionally, I am the first certified mentor produced under the PAL mentoring program, through the office of Student Life. I graduated Summa Cum Laude, based on my honors thesis regarding negotiation of multiple ethnic identities, and was also honored by the EOP offices, Ethnic Studies Department, and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund for my work surrounding diversity & inclusion, community engagement, and outreach. I am getting ready to roll out my new post-graduation venture based in diversity training, motivational speaking and mentoring. On May 3rd, I will hold an event that will introduce this venture and will treat community members to an excellent free program, including free food and beverage. I am also a CU Advocate through Michele McKinney and President Benson's office. I so enjoyed my university experience at CU Denver and am moving forward in my community based work, and educational advocacy through a speaking and training based business, coupled with and educational advocacy based non-profit that will be rolled out in the fall of 2014. Thanks so much for your interest in my activities and story!

#### **Roger C. Allen, '52, CU-Boulder**

Some sixty-three years ago, during the Christmas holiday, an elderly gentleman friend in Denver escorted me to President Bob Stearn's office at the University of Colorado. I had been tracked for the engineering program, but was overloaded with courses as a transfer student from Colorado College. Although my first quarter at CU was a disaster, my Denver friend was aware of my academic success at CC. Since he also knew Bob Stearns, he took me to see him. We rode the bus to Boulder on a cold December day.

We discussed my predicament and President Stearns recommended I take some testing which resulted in my switching to a liberal arts program. Among my new courses was a class in the speech department called oral interpretation. That class was the beginning of a long career in the field of speech, radio-TV and theater arts. After graduating from CU with a

commission in the U.S. Navy, I served in the Korean Conflict. Following my naval service, I earned an M.A. at the University of Wisconsin in Drama and TV. Next, I taught speech at Syracuse University, the University of Michigan (while conducting doctoral studies) and the University of Arizona. Later, I was an 'Emmy' award PBS TV producer-moderator for many years, taught at all levels of public education and even trained Samoans to be teachers in far away Pago Pago, American Samoa.

I officially retired in 1989. Then, I served as a VISTA volunteer, served in the PEACE Corps and also AmeriCorps. I even taught ESL to Hispanic seniors at Chicanos Por La Causa in Tucson and was coordinator for the mentoring program at the Job Corps Center in Tucson. Now at age 82+, I have been the Director and Founder of "The Desert Readers" in Tucson for more than six years. This unique community service out-reach program "communicates to change the human condition by 'making a difference' in the lives of senior citizens" who reside in assisted living facilities, senior health care centers and retirement communities. Our performances include music, sing alongs and the reading of a variety of light-hearted humorous and inspirational selections. This past week, The Desert Readers rendered its 380th performance. In addition, I teach classes in "Growing Old Gracefully with Meaning and Purpose" and other classes in "Reading Aloud Effectively" for Tucson OASIS.

Presently, I am proposing an "Arizona Community Corps" to serve in the cities throughout Arizona. It would have the same kinds of foci and similar benefits that the national public service programs offer.

I am grateful to President Bob Stearns for recognizing my potential and suggesting a different course of study which changed my life forever. That's my story.

### Adria Chamberlain, '00, CU-Boulder

CU pushed me, challenged me and showed me I could not only survive, but THRIVE, living outside my comfort zone. Coming from a small coastal Maine town where I sat next to the same person in homeroom for 12 years, going to CU was a big leap of faith for me. I didn't have any doubts about its academic excellence, but rather the doubts were about who would I need to be and how much I would need to stand on my own. What I found was an environment that provided everything I needed to be successful and everything I needed to enjoy my time there. I benefited from the smaller communities Boulder provided through the Greek system, honor societies, sports, academic dorms, and activities I couldn't have previously dreamed of. At the same time I also benefited from the challenges and opportunities only a large, renowned university can provide. Ever since enrolling, I've thanked the stars that I chose to attend CU. I have become a better person, student, colleague and friend for it and enjoyed every minute!

### Carrie Coll, '96, CU-Boulder

The education I received and experiences I had while a student at the University of Colorado set me on the path to finding a career field that has been challenging and fulfilling for me. I went off to college with the intent to get an education and degree that would lead me into the field of medicine. Orthopedic and sports medicine was my area of focus as I'd been a competitive figure skater for 10 years prior and spent my share of time in doctor's offices and physical therapy clinics. Looking for some practical skills to add to the 'book' of knowledge, I

asked one of my biology lab partners about the shirt he was wearing embroidered with "Sports Medicine" and the CU Buffalo logo. He was a student athletic trainer and worked with student-athletes in Division I sports that CU sponsored. He was my "in" to join the program. I had more than three years of amazing hands-on experience taping ankles, evaluating injuries and learning the dynamics of the athletic department operations. I had incredible experiences traveling with the women's volleyball team and providing medical coverage for home football games. It instilled in me a great deal of self-confidence. I had early challenges of managing a staff of newer student trainers, keeping documentation and inventory, and learning how to be diplomatic in choosing my words wisely when speaking to coaches, student-athletes and their parents about an injury. The list is by no means inclusive, but all of those experiences set me up for a career in sports where I've served as the Senior Director of Events and Elite Athlete Relations for U.S. Figure Skating and now currently serving as an Associate Commissioner at the Mountain West Conference. Thank you, CU!

**Pamela Devon, '96, '06, CU-Boulder**

My life and career have been deeply enriched through the two master's degrees that I earned at CU: an executive MBA in 1996 and a master's in enterprise technology in 2006. I love CU and the great students and staff who challenged me to complete the educational journey - which should never end. There is always something new to learn. Thank you, CU!

**W. Steve Eslary, '01, CU-Boulder**

I came to CU Denver after a 25-year Air Force career in education administration, taking courses on and off since 1972. I received both a bachelor's and master's in political science and started a second career at CU, and eventually retired in 2004. The tuition assistance program for employees allowed me to work at CU and complete both degrees. This helped me be a more qualified and competent employee. The education I received in political science has made me an ardent advocate for CU. My wife and I are members of the CU Heritage Society and provide scholarship and endowment support to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences through the CU Foundation. Thank you, CU, for all that my family and I have received over the years.

**Peter Estrella, '91-'99, CU-Boulder**

While attending CU-Boulder for 10 years straight - summer, fall, and spring semesters - I was trying to find out what I could become. I would not have become what I am today, without my education and experiences at CU-Boulder. I never knew what to do, besides to stay in school. While still in school wondering what to do, I met a person on the way to her shop on the Pearl Street Mall. She wanted me to come to her fortune telling shop to "read" my eyes. Apparently she studied one's eyes to tell their future. She said I had unique eyes and gave me a complimentary reading. I said ok, and I went to her shop. She read my eyes, and a week later, what she predicted in my eyes, came true. The rest of the story is what I have been doing ever since that happened in 1996. Three years later, in 1999, I left CU to do hospitality development consulting, and I am still doing it today. In the end, I finally found my calling in life, by walking through the doors of one of the finest universities in the world, which also is the most beautiful. I truly miss the university.

## Greg Giuffra, '06, CU-Boulder

CU – particularly the Leeds School of Business – did so much for me. While I was a human resources major, I didn't feel that would be my career path after college. I took a number of finance courses, including Personal Financial Planning, which was instructed by the late Professor Edward Gak. This ended up being my favorite class at CU because it resonated with me. Professor Gak was so engaging. Participation was mandatory and it made for a highly informative and productive class. Sure enough, I am now a financial consultant for a large Fortune 500 brokerage firm, and I know this class helped play a part in where I am today. Also, some of my best memories of CU were attending many a Buffs game with friends; we still actively follow them. It's hard to match the overall college experience one gets while at the University of Colorado Boulder.

## James (Jim) Minard, '64, CU-Boulder

I came across an interesting research paper by a famous CU faculty member, Michael Wertheimer, and wrote to him. He eventually became my Ph.D. adviser. With his guidance, along with another expert on the CU faculty, I produced a dissertation and several papers that were published in good journals and cited by others. Mike (I now call him) was able to place me in the medical school that hosted the meeting at which the world's sleep/wake researchers and clinicians were speaking. With that head start in the field, I have had 30 years of climbing the academic ladder in medical schools. I also had the pleasure to teach in universities and colleges. I'm currently finishing a critical, narrative nonfiction book on my "adventure," describing implications for other new sciences with clinical applications.

## Abby Parsons, '09, CU-Boulder

I attended my first CU football game when I was 2 weeks old. Ever since that day, I have had black and gold running through my veins. CU is very important to my family. The meaning of CU holds a very special place in my heart. I was lucky enough to attend CU from 2005-2009. I was one of very few from my high school in northern Colorado who made the trek to Boulder – a trek that all 12 of us would never forget.

Being an alumna now, I have seen a trend with students who leave and come to CU (especially in CSU and UNC territory up in northern Colorado). The trend is that we all succeeded in some way or another. We all finished in four (or so) years, and we all did something very different and special. We didn't move back home with mom or dad after graduation, like many of our high school friends ended up doing. I am confident in saying that CU and the Boulder community had a lot to do with our success and our will to want to make it on our own.

As an alumni, CU advocate and fan, I have made it part of my daily/weekly/monthly goal to create awareness about how wonderful CU-Boulder is. There are definitely some people out there who do not see what I see, but they also didn't get the opportunities CU has given me. Looking at CU from the outside can be daunting, which is what I have come to understand. As an alum, it is my job and that of all the other alumni to change that perception. I am proud to say that I spread the word of CU on a daily basis and I wouldn't change it for the world.

## Mary Roberts-Diard, '05, CU-Boulder

I graduated in 2005 from CU after having had four enriching years at the Boulder campus. After having gone on an exchange trip to Rennes, France as a French major, I decided to give the French life a chance post-graduation. I have lived in France ever since. I am currently an English teacher in Lyon but obviously use my French every day. A big "merci" to the wonderful French department at CU for such a fulfilling experience!

## Gloria Schoch, '08, CU Denver

My two CU degrees have provided me incredible opportunities. CU has opened the door to the community network and necessary skills to pursue a rewarding career in corporate social responsibility and public affairs. It has inspired me to make a difference in the world.

## Mark Wiebe, '07, CU-Boulder

My name is Mark Wiebe, and I play French horn for the Amazonas Philharmonic. I did my undergraduate work at CU-Boulder, and studied under the direction of Professor Michael Thornton. Studying at CU was the catalyst of my career. I learned most of what I know today from Professor Thornton, with the help of Dr. Pinkow (CU) and Professor Jeffery Lang (Philadelphia Orch.). CU provided me with some of the best musical training and professors in the Midwest.

## Russell Williams, '07, CU-Boulder

The high school honors institute was a program I attended junior year of high school; it inspired me to pursue a degree in engineering. I tried electrical engineering, engineering physics and then, finally, architectural engineering. It was easy to fall in love with architecture on the CU-Boulder campus because everything is well-designed, and the architecture accentuates the natural look of the Flatirons. Years later, I'm a project manager for a commercial glazing contractor. I have just recently completed a job on the CU-Boulder campus! It's the CU biotechnology building and it has been so rewarding to work on a CU project with all the skills I learned at engineering school in Boulder. We might struggle on the football field, but in my opinion, we have the most well-rounded disciplines in engineering and the most beautiful campus in Colorado. Thank you CU, you have put me at the top of my game, much further ahead than most all my peers.

## Sarah Willis-Kanter, '88, CU-Boulder

The stature and beauty of CU-Boulder's campus instantly captures anyone who visits. The high academic success of the professors made me choose to attend CU. I graduated with a degree in psychology and began working in the field immediately upon graduation. While at CU I found I studied hard, enjoyed the campus life and had access to internships and professional groups that allowed me to explore many areas. I took electives in business and accounting that allowed me to expand my knowledge base in areas outside my major. That type of subject matter exploration was key to opening doors to a career for me. Today I have a master's degree in psychology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., but I use my experience from CU at work as a product manager for an accounting and supply chain

software program for hospitals. The breadth of experience that CU offered has allowed my career to take directions I had not envisioned originally when I first enrolled. I still look back, 24 years later, fondly on my days at CU. CU's professors, students and assistant teachers made the educational experience valuable and fun.

{end-item}  
{start-item}

## **Faculty**

There are no current Faculty stories.

{end-item}  
{start-item}

## **Staff**

### **David Marler, CU-Boulder**

I have worked for the CU Housing Department for the past 25 years. This university has been and still is very important to me and my family. Not only has it provided for a good life, but it is a great environment to work in. I had a chance to attend a seminary school for two years and my department let me take the morning classes, while I made up the time I missed by working a late schedule. These classes made my walk with the Lord closer, which made me a better employee. In 2004, I was diagnosed with cancer. I underwent 35 radiation treatments to my head and neck and six chemo treatments that lasted for four hours each. I missed about six months of work. When I was released to come back to work, I could not pass my physical, which was part of my job as an asbestos worker for housing. I'm not able to wear a respirator because the radiation treatment damaged my saliva glands, so I have to continuously drink or have candy in my mouth all the time. CU offered me a painter/carpenter job, which I have now. CU has taken very good care of me through this whole process. I'm happy to say that I'm cancer free for the past seven years. I try to thank God every day for this job. When I get the chance to share my testimony with my co-workers I can do so freely. That's another thing that's great about working at CU - you can share your faith without worrying about losing your job. Thanks for this opportunity to share.

{end-item}  
title="Student's and Parent's"

### **Wendy Sangaline (formerly Otto) - is a current parent**

When I first moved to Boulder in 1992, I had a tough time finding a full-time teaching job, much less a substitute teaching job. Even though I had a teaching credential, I worked for a local commercial photographer (for minimum wage) and I had a part-time job as a waitress at Denny's, just to make ends meet. It soon became obvious that I needed an advanced degree in order to compete in the job market. I applied to CU for admission into their graduate program in Education, and thanks to the Bueno Center, I now have my Masters in Education. I loved my professors and learning was so truly rewarding. Through my program, I was introduced to so many incredible people and because I lived in on campus, in family housing, my neighbors not only became my close friends, but they were like family. It was truly some of the best times of my life! Immediately after graduation, I was hired on-the-spot at my one (and

only) interview. This is now my 16th year of teaching in Jefferson County Public Schools. I owe it all to my time and experience at CU Boulder.<sup>4</sup>

Susan Zimmerman is a current parent.

Our son graduated from Niwot High School, with an impressive resume including IB program, State Qualifier for both XC and Track, countless extracurricular activities all with a GPA in the top 20% of his class. He took and passed with highest scores all the IB exams and AP exams available to him. He applied to many renowned Universities around the country such as Leigh, University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, Washington University etc. He also applied to CU Boulder as his back up. At the time we were convinced that a student with this amount of ambition, talent and drive needed to be at and "Elite" university. In our minds and truly judging only by reputation we had already discounted CU Boulder mostly because we were not fond of the party school reputation and thought it would be good for him to move away from home for college. In the end we could not have been more wrong.

During the course of the college application process our son found himself only a number at these elite universities as he did not fit many of the quota criteria. He did not qualify for need based scholarships. He is not a minority. We are not a military family and so on. He fell through the cracks, despite efforts to visit the universities, and was even turned down by my husband's alma mater, Washington University. We found that despite his academic achievements not one of the elite universities considered him for any merit awards.

As we sat down to make our decisions between the universities we realized that the elite universities saw him as a number and us only as a pay check. We were told repeatedly by college counselors that "College is a business."

It was at the admitted student's tea for the Leeds Business School at CU Boulder where we were all so impressed with a young student advocate Sophie Lalonde, Dean Smith and Dean Ikenberry that we knew the best school for our son was in our own back yard. Our son is a freshman at CU Boulder, Class of 2015.

In retrospect having our son close to home as he makes the transition to adulthood has made it easier and yet living in the dorms has given him the same independence he would have had moving away. At CU Boulder our son is not a number but a member of the University family. The culture of community and empowerment of students and their ideas is more than we could have hoped for him. We have witnessed firsthand how the leaders of the University are addressing the "Party" reputation. It is definitely not the current direction. With now 5 Nobel Laureates, there is a lot of serious learning going on at CU. The academic rigor is on par with any of the elite universities we had previously considered. As a bonus this is one of the most beautiful campuses we have ever seen and the price is about half of the elite schools our son almost attended. Our recent research is showing that the job placement rate and pay is on par any of the elite universities as well.

Over the winter break our son told us "He could not be at a better place for his career". Today he received a letter from Dean Smith congratulating him on making the Dean's list.

Don't overlook CU Boulder. It has been a wonderful choice.

**Friend, Industry Partner**

**Groups audience:**

CU Advocates

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.cu.edu/cu-advocates/share-your-cu-story/stories>

**Links**

[1] <https://www.cu.edu/cu-advocates/share-your-cu-story/stories>

[2] <https://www.cu.edu/cuadvocates/forms/why-cu-important-you>