

The University of Colorado Boulder Entrepreneurship Creative Problem Solving Initiative

The core goal of the Entrepreneurship and Creative Problems Solving Initiative at the University of Colorado Boulder is to bring together faculty, staff, students, and community members to develop graduates with *entrepreneurial mindsets* and an interest in *creative problem solving methodologies* (most notably, design-centered thinking). Such graduates will be tomorrow's leaders and innovators. This initiative will coordinate a federated model of entrepreneurial experimentation and engagement across campus. In so doing, engaged faculty, staff, students, and Deans from all schools and colleges will work across campus to ensure that the University of Colorado-Boulder is one of the nation's leading entrepreneurial universities.

The pace of change today and the need for problems solvers and developers of innovative solutions is greater than ever before. For universities to develop leaders across a range of sectors, and to translate ideas from the lab, the practice room, or the whiteboard into action, it is crucial to create courses and project-based learning opportunities and challenges. At CU-Boulder, the New Venture Challenge is at the core of the Initiative, providing faculty, staff, and students an opportunity to test, develop, and gain support for emerging projects, whether a startup company, an arts initiative, or a social enterprise.

The New Venture Challenge also draws in a range of mentors from the community, who will work together with Entrepreneurs in Residence and a cohort of faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows. The Entrepreneurs in Residence program will work in tandem with such Fellows by bringing to campus seasoned and emerging entrepreneurs, hiring them to work part-time with the initiative, mentoring students, faculty, and staff, and enabling them to develop their own companies. (For those entrepreneurs from other countries, it also enables them to work on their own initiatives, projects, and/or companies while benefitting from the university's H1B visa program.)

The faculty Entrepreneurship Fellows will operate as a cohort of faculty and staff members committed to using design-centered thinking, providing creative problem solving opportunities involving project-based learning (whether in courses or extra-curricular activities), and developing an entrepreneurial mindset. These Fellows will be given grants to support such

experiments and projects. They will also serve as the review committee for a seed grant program, administered by the Silicon Flatirons Center, which will provide support to any faculty, staff, or students developing curricular or extracurricular projects that develop or depend upon an entrepreneurial mindset and/or innovative problem solving methodologies.

The University of Colorado Boulder is fortunate to be situated in one of the most vibrant entrepreneurial communities in the world and one that lives the spirit of “give before you get” and collaborate first. The University of Colorado-Boulder is already engaged with a number of leaders in that community, hosting the Blackstone Entrepreneurs Network and Startup Colorado. Building deeper connections with the community, with respect to mentoring, collaboration on projects, and inspirational guidance that can benefit faculty, staff, and students alike, will be a core goal of the Initiative. Such relationships and connections will lead to a stronger reputation for the University, more opportunities for student success (and employment), and additional funding avenues for the University.

By developing this Initiative, the campus can establish a national leadership position as an entrepreneurial university. By leveraging the many talented individuals and projects on campus (including the Blackstone Entrepreneurs Network, Startup Colorado, Spark Boulder, Catalyze CU, and Ideas to Action), building on the high level of collaboration across campus (including with the New Venture Challenge), and the tremendous community leadership in Colorado, CU-Boulder can prepare our students for success in a changing world. With the experience and cross-disciplinary skill set facilitated by the Initiative, CU-Boulder will elevate the employment opportunities of its graduates and boost their imagination and ambitions for what they can accomplish.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- (1) Should our ultimate goal be to enable every student on the campus to develop a foundation in entrepreneurial thinking—that is, to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and fluency with entrepreneurial methodologies?
- (2) How should we work to benchmark progress as we scale up this initiative---(a) number of involved students; (b) number of involved faculty;

(c) extent of company creation; (d) number of courses or extracurricular opportunities expressly grounded in entrepreneurship; etc.

(3) How can we best leverage and involve the community to support our effort to scale up the campus entrepreneurship initiative?

(4) When and how should we communicate the extent and ambition of the initiative so as to brand CU as a top entrepreneurial university?